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BY

JOHN BOURDIEU WILKINSON, B.A., CANTAB.,

SENIOR ASSISTANT PRIEST OF S. PAUL'S, KNIGHTSBRIDGE,
AND CHAPLAIN TO THE EARL OF KINNOULL.

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DEDICATED

TO THE

REV. GEORGE RUNDLE PRYNNE, M.A.,

Perpetual Curate of S. Peter's, Plymouth.

MY DEAR PRYNNE,

When I told you that I was going to dedicate this little Book to you, you were good enough to suggest that I should dedicate it to a "bigger man" and not to one so "small" as yourself.

I found you quite big enough for me when I worked very happily with, and under you. For you had, and I am sure have, a big and a true heart. And your big heart, under God's grace, has produced the biggest MISSION work in the Metropolis of the West of England, and therefore to whom else, I ask you, could I so appropriately dedicate a simple Volume of MISSION SERMONS?

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Will you accept this Dedication as a token both of respect, and of affection? I say both, because, from me, both are due to you, and the one is not of much good without the other.

Believe me to be,

My dear Prynne,

Always yours respectfully and
affectionately in CHRIST,

J. B. WILKINSON.

LONDON, 1871.

PREFACE.

SINCE the publication of the First, and indeed of the Second Edition of my "Mission Sermons," the very word Mission has acquired a technical meaning amongst us. I wish to make it clear that I do not use this title now, as I did not then, in its technical sense.

This Second Series, like the first, may be called Mission Sermons only so far as they are intended to be plain, for the most part short, dealing with vital truths, following the course of the seasons of the Church, and adapted for all classes. They have been preached (much as they are printed) to different congregations, composed of the richest and the poorest, of the most highly educated (from a secular point of view) and the most uneducated.

I have endeavoured, with God's help, to make them intelligible to all without going out of my way to offend; but, at the same time, to proclaim to the best of my knowledge the "whole counsel of God," as taught by the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of CHRIST.

In these troublous times I have felt how necessary it is that the trumpet should give no uncertain sound, but also that all "things" should be "done," and all words spoken in love and "Charity."

If this Second Series of Mission Sermons should prove as acceptable as the First, I hope to venture ere long upon a Third, of a more miscellaneous character.

To the Blessed JESUS, our LORD and our GOD, I humbly commend my little work, with the earnest prayer that He may bless it to all who love, or wish to love, His Holy Name, and to all who have been brought, or wish to be brought to the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Him.

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SERMON I.

Advent.

THE COMING OF THE KING

S. MATTH. XXI. 5.

"BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE."

There is

I ~~KNOW~~ no season of the Christian Year more important, or more full of varied teaching and feeling, than ^{advent} that upon which we have just now entered.

Look at it which way we will, and we are met by—not difficulties indeed—but by (if one may so say, and ~~unless we are careful~~) conflicting, almost bewildering thoughts.

We are taken *back*, on the one hand, into the far distant ages, even to the very creation of man: we remember that the first man's sin was the cause of the Incarnation, the first coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Then we are carried, on the other hand, *forward* to that great Day of His Second Coming, when Eternity shall begin, and time be no more.

Then again it seems, ~~my brethren~~, so hard to be thinking at the same moment, and of the same Person, as CHRIST the SAVIOUR, and CHRIST the Judge: to have one season, and especially one or two Sundays of that season, to meditate upon, and to bring to bear upon our own lives, Christmas and the Day of Judgment—our dear LORD's first coming and His second coming, the first Advent and the second Advent: His Humility and His Glory: to think of the same LORD seated "upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass," and "seated upon the Throne of Glory:" the same LORD in the manger of the stable of a poor inn, with a few poor shepherds and the beasts of the stall round Him, the same LORD as on Palm Sunday with a little band of Jewish children accompanying Him, with their Hosannas; and yet again the same LORD surrounded by Angels, and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven!

Yes, ~~my brethren~~, this is the grand utterance of the Catholic Faith, sharply, and clearly, and forcibly brought out. It is that which every Christian man believes, for it is nothing more than what the creed teaches of the same LORD, that He "was Incarnate by the HOLY GHOST of the Virgin Mary," "was made Man," and yet that "He shall come again with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead."

But since these are not only great truths, but truths of great vital consequences to us, since

they are not things to repeat with our mouths, but to live in our lives, since they are not abstract truths, or amusing tales, or interesting histories only, but because they affect each one of us, what should be our feeling at the way in which we are mixed up with these truths? what *practical* effect are they to have upon us? We proclaim our belief in them—good. What is the result?

Are we amazed at our dear LORD's condescension in coming to be born of a woman, in taking our nature, nay, more, our very flesh upon Him? Do we feel penetrated with love at the thought of our King leaving the courts of Heaven, to dwell in humble guise and for a little space among us? Is it marvellous to think for a moment, to realize in never so faint a degree, that not only His condescension and love, but that our sins brought Him down to this earth of ours. Nay, more, that He who is Holiness became, as it were, sin for us? Does it in any way awake in us a suspicion of our ingratitude, at our little, cold, fickle, weak, wavering love for Him, when we think of the depth of His Love for us?

You see even the thought of His first coming, His Incarnation, is not without its lesson for us, and that in this way, namely, that from thinking that He *did* come, we begin to find ourselves thinking *why* He came. "Came down from Heaven," indeed, but came down "for us men and for our salvation." The thought of our short-

coming cannot altogether be absorbed, even by the thought of His Love: we know He came, but we ought never to forget why He came.

2 But what shall we say when we bring into relief the other great teaching of Advent? We know of His Mercy, we know of His Love, but we know also of His Justice. He will be the Judge as He has been the SAVIOUR—a King, indeed, both now, and then, but then chiefly a King Who is about to take account of His servants; a King Who is going out to war against His enemies, and with a certainty of victory, as it is written, “The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.”

Alas! for us, if at that day we should be found amongst the open enemies, or false friends, or secret traitors, or rebellious subjects, of the Great King! Alas! for us in that terrible day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, when every thought, word, and deed of our lives—not of this or that portion of our lives, but of our *whole* lives, from infancy through youth and manhood to old age, of many a long-forgotten sin, unrepented of, unatoned for, unforgiven, shall stand, as it were, in all its real blackness and guilt before our eyes, when we shall appear to ourselves and to an assembled world, as we really are, not as others and even we imagined ourselves to be. “Behold! thy King cometh unto thee.” ✕ *over*

Now let us put these thoughts side by side

with the solemn words of the Epistle of this day. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." What is this night, and how is it far spent? The night is our life here on earth,—the day is the day of judgment.

Strange, mournful words they are! "Far spent,"—alas for time lost! alas for time mis-spent! "Far spent,"—much, much of this night gone beyond recovery,—not one moment to be bought back with mines of wealth, no effort available, not even the toil of a life, not even the giving up of life, to bring back one moment!

And the Day "at hand" too! What day? *The Day* which stands out from all other days with such terrible distinctness; a day more eventful than *the* day of our birth; the day beyond which there is no reckoning of days. The birthday is the beginning of life,—*that* day is the beginning of eternity.

"At hand!" as if we could touch it; and yet we think it so far off. For what, after all, in the light of eternity, is the length of a few weeks, months, or years of life? At hand! so close, as if we could reckon it rather of the present than of the future,—*the* day upon the very verge of which our footsteps seem to tremble though we will not realize it.

So far for the Gospel and Epistle of this day. Now then in conclusion let us add to these the words of one of the Lessons, without which, even

our more frequent worship this Advent will be unavailing. It is this grand, all-comprehensive lesson, "Wash you, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes: cease to do evil, learn to do well." Ah, yes; if we learn *that* lesson thoroughly, death would have no terrors, and judgment would have no dread for us.

So once more, and in the last place, let ^{us} ~~me~~ remind ^{ourselves} ~~you~~ of how in one respect Advent differs from Lent. ~~Lent is, to a certain extent, a preparation for Easter; Lent is a time for fasting and prayer; so in a degree is Advent too. But in~~ Advent there is, as it were, for the Christian man, a golden thread of comfort running through it: there is a feeling of hope, of expectation, of present realisation. It seems somehow easier to go with the Shepherds to Bethlehem, than to ascend Calvary, or watch beside the cold silent tomb: it is less of a strain upon the mental faculties. There is no harm in this,—it is in accordance with the mind of the Church. The Church requires us, (and this is the primary teaching of Advent,) to place ourselves in the position of God's chosen people of old, expecting the coming of the CHRIST, the Anointed, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us, as we sing in our hymn at this season—

"O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel."



But now, lastly, let us think of our King; "Behold thy King cometh:"—the King that cometh unto us; "Behold thy King cometh:"—nay more, let each think for himself; "Behold thy King cometh unto thee." He is *my* King,—I have a *personal* interest in Him. *My* King cometh unto *me*; He comes to redeem me from the captivity of sin; He comes, King though He be, to teach me humility by His example; He comes to make me as one of His children; He comes to lift up my head if I am in trouble, or sorrow, or need; He comes to release, to ransom me when I am sore beset by my sins. He is the SAVIOUR, and my "redemption draweth nigh." He gives me in His Church these weeks of Advent as a time of revival, of making greater efforts to entertain Him with honour. He would have me "wait for" His "lovingkindness in the midst of" His "Temple," just as blessed Simeon and Anna waited of old. He comes to me in my prayers and in my meditations; He enlightens my intellect and inflames my affections. Above all, He vouchsafes to me in Holy Communion His own Presence to bless me; then and there, above all other ways, He knits my heart to Him, and through Him to those who have departed from me in His faith and in His fear. He dwells in me, and takes me to dwell in Him; He bids me look forward with awe, and yet with hope, and love, and humility,—with earnest trust and un-

failing confidence *to that day* when He shall indeed come to me and I go to Him, never more to be separated, when I may hope to hear His voice, the voice of my King, saying to me, "Come, thou blessed of My FATHER, enter into the Kingdom prepared for thee before the foundation of the world." He comes, blessed be His Name, He is come that I might "have life," yea, even Life Eternal !

Penitential season though Advent is, yet it is full of brightness, full of joyful anticipation, full of promise, full of blessedness, because of the coming of the King, if only we are prepared to meet Him.

SERMON II.

Advent.

GOD'S JUSTICE, AND GOD'S MERCY.

HEB. X. 31.

“IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE
LIVING GOD.”

WHAT is it in our minds which naturally recoils from the idea of a God of vengeance, or an avenging God? The very Name of God conveys to our apprehension primarily no other attribute than that of goodness, or the Supreme Good. We love to dwell on the thought of the infinity of God's perfections as shown by His mercies, by His lovingkindness, by His forbearance, by His long-suffering, by His readiness to pardon, by His willingness to forgive, “even to the uttermost.”

We sin, and we say, God is merciful; and we sin again, and we say, God is very merciful. Sometimes, perhaps, a transient misgiving crosses

our minds that we are not acting *quite* fairly to God, but we put it away and say, God is very merciful, He will not be "extreme to mark what is done amiss."

In a word, we will not face the fact of God's justice; we keep on shutting our eyes to it; we quote to ourselves all the examples of God's recorded mercies in the Holy Scriptures; we remember how David was pardoned, and Nineveh spared, and the Magdalene forgiven, and even the thief received from the Cross into Paradise. And, from one point of view, we do well.

But for the most part we, or at least some of us, will not or dare not realize or face the other side of the question. Alas, too often we are bolstered up in our blindness by the whole drift of popular opinion, and backed up by the inclination, the bias of our own lower nature. Ministers of religion often help to keep up the illusion. The world is quite ready, and we are also quite ready, to believe in a God of mercy, but the world refuses, and we begin to refuse, to give credence to a God of justice, much less to a God of vengeance.

Now all this is very natural; and doubtless it is not unpleasant to fall in with what the world believes. It saves a deal of controversy; it enables us to make the best of this life, and leave the next to shift for itself; it enables us to avoid singularity, and to float easily down with the tide of

popular opinion. Our conscience is first soothed and appeased, and then deadened, quenched, or stifled.

Or we solve for ourselves, and to our entire, or, at least, to our partial satisfaction, that most difficult problem of living both for God and for mammon, of serving two masters, of making the best of both worlds, trusting, we say, to the mercy of God, and in the merits of CHRIST.

In such cases, for the most part, we probably might like indeed to avoid directly religious phraseology; we rather use some such sentence as this, we "trust somehow that all will come right at last." How all is to "come right," and what is meant by "at last," we do not stop to inquire. We simply trust to God's mercy, and leave the question of His justice out of sight.

The result of this habit of mind is that in the place of God we place an ideal Being, of our own devising,—a Being who is always to forgive and never to punish; or we get even beyond this, and we eliminate the Being, and place in His stead an idea.

Now, if this be true, then is all theology at fault, and God's Word an imposture, and the Church of CHRIST a myth and a delusion,—nay, then is God Himself untrue, or as it is written, though I would fain not say it, then all teaching of such men would be true and "God a liar"—God Who is the Truth and "cannot lie!"

In plain language, if we adopt anything like these ideas we are fairly embarked on the sea of free-thinking, which is only another name for infidelity. For remember there is no intellectual or appreciable standpoint between the whole counsel of God, the whole teaching of CHRIST'S Church and infidelity.

I do not for a moment mean that all are necessary infidels who do not believe all and everything taught by God in His Church; but I do mean, for instance, that to deny the eternity of future punishment does away with the idea of the justice of God, and as God cannot be God without being just, it is tantamount to denying the existence of God Himself. God may and does keep many from this fearful result, but nevertheless it is its legitimate outcome,—it is the point upon which your liberal in religion must land himself in the long run.

Dear brethren, one is forced in these times to use very plain language when we speak of the cardinal truths of religion; for “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;” and if it be so “fearful” a “thing,” surely it is well that we should realize its fearfulness, in its absolute truth and in its awful consequences.

Our text standing by itself alone is “fearful” enough, but if we go a verse or two back in this tenth chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, we are brought face to face with another assertion

more "fearful" still, so "fearful" indeed that without qualification, or rather explanation, our mind would still more recoil, and react from it further still.

It is written, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful," (mark the repetition of the word,) "fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

And then follows a "fearful" illustration. The Apostle shows that though we *are* living under the covenant of grace and mercy, though we *are* living under the gospel dispensation, yet, and for that very reason, our account will be stricter, our reckoning heavier, than that of those who lived under the covenant of works or under the Law. There is the first point.

It is written again, and I call your attention to it, in verse 28, "He that despised Moses' Law died *without mercy* under two or three witnesses : of how *much sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." In other words, if the Israelite of old was to be stoned for transgressing the Covenant, and for going to serve other gods,—if this was to be his punishment,—how much greater,

“how much sorer” should the “punishment” of the Christian be, who belies his name, and insults his religion, and rejects his SAVIOUR, and provokes the wrath of the Lamb of God, and resists or quenches the Spirit of love, and really (while he denies Him) calls upon his Maker to visit him with His vengeance or invokes upon himself the sentence of justice and of judgment.

Hence it follows in the next verse, so as to guard against any possible evasion of the plain meaning of the words, “We know Him that hath said,” we know, that is, that He is the God Who cannot err, “we know Him that hath said” of old time, “To Me belongeth vengeance, I will recompense,” and Who now repeats “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” or “Vengeance belongeth to Me, I will recompense, saith the LORD,” or again, “we know Him that hath said, The LORD shall” not only “have *mercy*,” but “The LORD shall *judge* His people.”

And then, as if the thought forced itself home upon the mind of even this Holy Apostle, he adds almost abruptly in the words of the text, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,”—a “fearful thing to fall into the hands,” not only “of God,” and for punishment, but into the “Hands of the Living God.” Mark this expression, it is not without a meaning, nay, rather, it is most emphatic, the “*Living* God.” The Living God! How strange it is that the very

same epithet which is here given to God should be the very one which is so often used to express His beneficence, or at least His might and His majesty, without any element of terror or fearfulness entering into it.

Some thirty or more times is this epithet of "the living" given to God in Holy Scripture. It implies not only His existence, but His existence from all and to all eternity. It brings the thought of God before us as the Source of Being, as the Fountain of Life, as that Principle in Whom we, and all created things, "live, and move, and have our being:" as the Power by which we energize, and without which we should cease to exist. It implies the great cardinal truth of our religion, the denial of which, or the want of realizing of which, underlies all heresies. It implies, on the other hand, a truth which, being thoroughly apprehended and understood as far as our finite intellect allows us, cuts at the root of all idealism, or rationalism, or infidelity: I mean that this epithet of the "Living God" implies and is alone capable, alone patient of the interpretation of a Personal God, namely, that God is something more than an influence, or a power, or an idea, that God is a PERSON; and that, further, as our First Article has it, "There is but one Living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and in-

visible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST."

Again, this expression, the "Living God," reminds us that though (and a most blessed truth it is) that though GOD is LOVE; the FATHER in sending His only begotten SON; the SON in being made Man and dying for us men and for our salvation; the HOLY GHOST in sanctifying, guiding, comforting, strengthening us; yet also that the same FATHER will judge the world by the same SON, and that the same HOLY GHOST does and will "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." So "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God."

But now the question remains, how shall we escape so great and so "fearful" a condemnation? It is a question that requires a lifetime to answer. "He that endureth"—not for a few years, not for many years, not when his feelings are excited, and enthusiasm is at its height, but—"He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." Now what is it to endure unto the end? It is to do the will of GOD. As it is written, "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the Will of GOD *abideth for ever*." And mark that doing the Will of GOD is not by mere *profession* of readiness to do that Will, for "Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall

enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that *doeth* the Will of My FATHER which is in Heaven."

Now to do the Will of GOD, we must first ascertain what that Will is; and this, not only in the greater, and, as we think, the more important things of our life, but as the Apostle says, "from the heart," that is, in all things. The Will of GOD left undone by us is GOD rebelled against. It is not only to "fall," but to throw ourselves into the "hands of the Living GOD," as rebellious subjects for punishment.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living GOD;" but let us take heart of grace. GOD does not *will* that we should suffer this "fearful thing" of falling into His hands, but the "Will of GOD is our sanctification." The Will of GOD is our salvation. GOD *wills* that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of His Truth. GOD *wills* the condemnation of none. GOD *wills* us to escape from the fearful thing of falling into His hands for punishment, whatever the difficulties, or dangers, or temptations of our position or station in life may be.

"Cast not away," the Apostle says, in the succeeding verses of this same chapter, "cast not away," he says, "therefore your confidence," your trustfulness, your firm, loving, fearing faith in GOD, "which hath great recompense of reward." Do not be discouraged or down-hearted, or in despair. Go on and persevere. Never rest

satisfied with your present state, and think that you are very well as you are. Grow, increase in God's grace, "in the grace and knowledge of the LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST," of Him Who came on earth, not to do His own Will, but the Will of Him that sent Him. "For," S. Paul continues, "ye have need of patience, that after ye have *done the Will of God*, ye might receive the promise."

It will not be for long for *any* of us. It cannot be long for *most* of us. "For," he goes on, "yet a *little while*, and He that shall come," the Comer (He Whose Advent we now bear in mind) "will come, and will not tarry." And His reward will be with Him. "Work your work betimes, and in His own time," yet a little while, "He will give you your reward." When He comes at the last Advent, will that reward be ours? Shall we have done the work He has appointed? Shall we escape that awful end of falling into the hands of the Living God?

Then S. Paul adds and ends with a final warning: "The just shall live by faith, but"—and it is a great "but"—"BUT if any man draw back My soul shall have no pleasure in him." If any man, that is, having put his hand to the plough, look back; if he be wearied with well-doing; if persecution, or, worse still, perhaps ridicule, cause him to be ashamed of CHRIST, and of confessing CHRIST openly and manfully as a true

soldier of the Cross; if any man turn traitor or deserter; then does he run the risk of that "fearful thing" of falling "into the hands of the Living God."

Thank God, there is another verse yet left of this chapter—God grant that we may humbly and lovingly take it to ourselves in all its simplicity, in all its fulness, in all its heartiness.

"But," S. Paul concludes—and it is another and a greater "BUT"—"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition," that is, unto "falling into the hands of the Living God." *Then* we are "of them that believe" in our hearts, and profess with our mouths, and practise in our lives "to the saving of the soul," through the mercy, by the merits, through the Mediation of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, into Whose merciful hands let us commend our spirits, for He Who is the God of Truth is our Redeemer as well as our Judge.

SERMON III.

Christmas.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

S. JOHN I. 14.

“AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US.”

ALLELUIA! LORD most Holy! Hail to the Eternal Word! All Praise, and Glory, and Might, and Honour, and Majesty be to CHRIST our God!

To-day, my brethren, we commemorate the twofold Nativity of the LORD JESUS CHRIST: the one, Eternal from the FATHER, the other, temporal from the Virgin; the one, without beginning, the other without end! We speak of the WORD, but we are at a loss for words: we know not *how* to speak. O how we should stand in amazement, in perfect, speechless awe when we meditate on this marvel of mysteries, this ineffable, awful, blessed Truth! O how we strive in vain to fathom even the very surface of the idea which these words ought to convey to us! The

ETERNAL WORD! He who was in the beginning! He who was with GOD! He who was and is GOD! Never created, but begotten! Not begotten only, but only begotten! GOD of GOD! Light of Light! very GOD of very GOD! The Creator of all things! for by Him all things were made! He, the WORD, was made FLESH!

He, who came as the Light to illuminate, and the Life to regenerate the human race, "was made FLESH!" "In Him," says S. John, "was life, and the Life was the Light of men." He, "was made FLESH" was "made MAN!" Well may we bow, or even kneel, in humble adoration at these great words in the Nicene Creed—"And was Incarnate . . . And was made MAN!" Can any position be lowly enough to adore such humility and such love? He was made MAN! He did not assume to Himself a Soul only, but a human Body also. He, the LORD, was not "made" into, nor converted into, nor joined to, man (so that there should be a third nature neither of GOD nor man,) but in the great words of Luke of Bruges, quoting probably from the Homily of S. Maximus, the Word remaining what it was, "was made" "what it was not." The Person of the SON of GOD was so joined, that is, not to a human Person, so that there should be two persons, but to a human nature, that the same Person should be GOD and man: and the "Word was made FLESH" or GOD-MAN, and "FLESH was made the Word," or MAN-GOD!

1. } Let us think for one moment of such an one as this being made Flesh. The very expression itself has its characteristic and peculiar meaning. He was "made *Flesh*," to mark out the depth of His humility. He was made, not man only, but He "was made" the lowest part of that of which human nature is composed, the part most removed from Divinity—Flesh! Think of the depth of His condescension, and mercy and love for us: all, and more even than we can possibly know or think of, much less express, all, everything seems concentrated in this sentence! Then, and then only, in its fullest sense, the incorruptible put on a corruptible nature, though He never could see and "saw no corruption:" the Immortal was clothed with mortality! He "was made *Flesh*," with all its infirmities, its human affections, its weakness, its liability to sin, (though He were sinless, and could not sin:) He "was made *Flesh*," with all its pains, to the most bitter and the most shameful, even to death. Death? worse than death! to die is no dishonour. But to be put to death shamefully, even to *that* depth of degradation did the Eternal Word condescend, to that Abyss did He stoop when He became or was "made *Flesh*." This is what is meant in part, and in an infinitesimal part, by that greatest of all sentences in God's Holy Word, "the Word was made *Flesh*."

But still as an abstract idea, this would not

sufficiently touch our hearts, though we might wonder, and be struck with astonishment at the awful mystery. We have more still to bear in mind, more, for "the Word was" not only "made Flesh," but "*dwelt among us.*" He "dwelt" or rather as the exact rendering of the word is, He "tabernacled" or made His "tabernacle" among us. O blessed Truth! He "dwelt" among us. And this not only by His grace, not only by distant effects of His power, not only in our human nature, which constitutes His Tabernacle, but the God-Man lived, dwelt, or sojourned as man amongst men! So was He made Flesh, and "dwelt among us!" He was conceived by the operation of the HOLY GHOST, He took Flesh of the most pure and holy Virgin, He was conceived without spot of sin, born without sin. So was He "made Flesh," and was born, and began to dwell among us first, as on this very Christmas Day.

Yes, indeed, dearest brethren, *now* at length the text reaches us! On this day the SON of God became the Son of Man, in order that the sons of men should become Sons of God, in order that we should be redeemed from the captivity of the devil, and ourselves become the Sons of God! On this day God's wrath is appeased; and the debt due to Him is, by anticipation, paid. Of His own free will, and for the love of mankind, for His love of each man, each one man, the Eternal Word proceeded out of the Bosom of

the Eternal FATHER, and “was made Flesh,” and came first on this day to “dwell” on earth, in the form of man, in the form of a helpless Infant! Born for us, born for *me*, we may each say: He was born for me on a cold winter’s night: far from even His earthly, His Mother’s home; born in the poor outhouse of a poor inn of a poor town in the country of Judea, in the town of Bethlehem: born of a despised race and of poor parents; born amongst the beasts of the stall; born in—aye, in a wretched manger. There! There! the LORD was made Flesh, and first “dwelt among us.”

Alleluia! LORD most holy!

In Thy Manger throne we hail Thee!

Alleluia! meek and lowly,

Never shall our worship fail Thee!

Alas for those with careless eyes and wandering gaze! Alas for those whose heart is untouched by all the earnest, and thrilling cries of repentance, and appeals, heart-enkindling appeals to affection, cries from the Manger of the Infant SAVIOUR! alas for those who never suffer their hearts to be really moved to their very lowest depths, but maintain a stolid indifference, or who preserve a cold, impassive, unmoved, loveless, external religion! Alas for those who look upon very worship itself, even the very Sacraments, as mere forms of things absent: whose wretched religion never rises above the dead level of a moral and out-

wardly religious life—perhaps not even that! I *know* what is wrong with you. You have never realized, you have no love for the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST our LORD; no love for, and no real belief in the GOD-MAN! You can *never* have let the thought penetrate, and as it were soak into your heart, that “the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.”

Can you ever have seen? oh, no! you can hardly have tried to see, tried once to concentrate your thoughts on the teachings of this Holy Day, this blessed Christmas Day! You have tried indeed to make His dwelling-place on earth bright with flowers, and the gleaming holly sprays—so far you have done well! you have done better if in your decorations you have set about your task with benevolent thoughts, with happiness, and brightness, and cheerfulness, and willing obedience, but without unseemly and frivolous talk and discordant laughter; you have made an effort to prolong your vigil last night, even to the hour when He “was made Flesh,” and first came to dwell among us. You have bent in lowly gesture before His Throne: you have brought here your offerings to lay at His feet! The wants of His Poor, or the support of His Minsters, or the beautifying of His House, have prompted you, or rather He has put it into your hearts, to do your utmost to honour this His glorious, bright, happy Birthday. You bring of your best for Him: you

provide a dwelling for Him, who is shelterless : you try as it were to screen Him, from the cold of that rude Manger Cradle of Bethlehem. You would replace the rags, those "swaddling clothes" with your own clothing, if need be. You have done well, right well ! But, O, in all this, you may have also ! we all have—failed, and come far short of what we ought to have done ! The thought is beyond our grasp, the mystery is beyond our reach, but whereinsoever we have failed, it was all for want of fully realizing the loving, the all-adorable Mystery of the Incarnation, the "Word made Flesh," and dwelling amongst us.

Who can see with the clear-sighted eyes of the spirit, that Holy Child lying in His Manger on this Christmas Day, and not have his spirit stirred within him to love and adoration ? Who can think for one moment of the group in that poor shed, and not learn all Christian virtues—purity, humility, gentleness, meekness, justice, patience, thanksgiving, and unceasing praise ? What deep, deep teaching, and yet what simple, child-like virtues are brought before us by the "Word made Flesh," and first dwelling among us on Christmas Day !

See what are some of the lessons of the Manger and its surroundings : for what else were the Blessed Mother, and S. Joseph, and the Angels, and the shepherds, and even the very beasts of the stall there ? there encompassing Him Who

encompasses all things ! this “ Word made Flesh,” surrounding Him, Who comprehends all things, Who made all things, and by Whom they themselves were made.

And now, too, once again He comes on earth ! He veils Himself once and again, in the lowly guise of Bread and Wine. As once, He appeared nothing but ■ poor Jewish Infant, and yet was God and Man—“ the Word made Flesh,” so now, though, in this Holy Service, He appears to outward eyes, but as mere elements of His own Creation, yet no less truly, no less really, is “ the Word made Flesh.” When is this, you ask ? I answer, when Bread becomes the Body of JESUS, and Wine His Blood, when Body, Soul and Divinity, when Godhead and Manhood, whole CHRIST are here in His Holy Thrice Blessed Sacrament. I answer, *now* when He comes in that Sacrament as the Life to sustain us, the Light to enlighten us here, to reconcile us to the FATHER, to dwell in us, to take us to dwell in Him : then is “ the Word made Flesh” and dwells not only “ among” us but also in us !

Is there one here who tries to believe this blessed teaching of the Church of CHRIST, but feels a difficulty about it ? or one who believes and yet fails to believe all he would believe ? Let him take this very simple rule, and say with an earnest, unprejudiced, loving, sorrowful, yet always rejoicing heart—

1. "LORD, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."
And then let him add those great words,

2. "God be merciful to me a sinner." And this will surely bring us to the last point, for we shall have already professed Faith, though it may be imperfect Faith, and Repentance; and now we want but one more thing, an intense desire to *love*, and we shall find this in a simple, loving, trusting, little sentence—let it be our third and last point. It is the teaching of the Apostle of Love, the Apostle of the Blessed Sacrament, the Apostle of Mysteries, the teaching of him who leaned on the Bosom of his LORD—let us say with him—

3. "Even so come, LORD JESUS," Word made Flesh, and dwelling among us, come to us, come to me by Thy grace and power in Thy Holy Sacrament. Come unto me, and bless me, my LORD and my God!

Alleluia! shine the tapers,

Gleams the holly's burnished spray:

Alleluia! chant the sanctus:

CHRIST! we welcome Thee to-day!

Alleluia! dearest JESUS,

Come to dwell once more with men:

Hush! the Priest his prayer hath finished,

JESUS is on earth again!

Down in adoration falling:

Hail! sweet Sacrament Divine

JESUS, hail! our souls are calling:

Thou art ours, and we are Thine!

SERMON IV.

Christmas.

THE SHINING OF THE LIGHT.

SONG OF SOLOMON II. 17.

“UNTIL THE DAY BREAK, AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY.”

THE coming of the last Day will be sudden to us; but it is not so, it cannot be so, to God. In His eternal purpose the greatest event which can happen to man—the coming of the last day, and the smallest which can happen to any one thing of God’s creation—the falling of a sparrow to the ground—both are, and have been eternally, equally known to God from all ages. So that, in one sense, it may be said, that nothing falls out *suddenly*, certainly as far as God is concerned. Even the wind “which bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth;” even “the lightning, which cometh out of the east, and shineth,” in a moment’s time, “even

unto the west ;” even the changes of the weather, the apparently immediate transitions from cold to heat, from sunshine to rain ; even death itself, which visits the highest and the lowest in the twinkling of an eye, and snatches them away from us, in the midst of youth and vigour—all is the work of God ; and “ *known* unto God are *all* His works, from the beginning of the world !”

This is equally true of God’s *mercies* : “ known also unto God” are all His mercies ; known to God is His love for us, and for each one of us, from the beginning of the world, before all times, before time was : for “ one day with the LORD is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Now God has *always* willed the salvation of man. He was *never* “ willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance.” He was always waiting, as it were, “ until the day should break, and the shadows should flee away.”

And on the one hand, as the suddenness of His wrath, His judgments, His punishments, His visitations, is an awful thought, and one upon which we have had occasion to dwell especially in Advent, so the *gradual* unfolding of His love, His mercy, His long-suffering, is, on this Christmas Day, a thought full of hope and comfort.

We, my brethren, are apt to look upon God’s acts to man, to ourselves, or to the whole world,

one by one, as *successive* tokens of His goodness ; but to God, they are but the gradual development of His Will, and that is the one great work which He has ever purposed—His love to the people of all ages, of all nations, of all countries. It is His eternal love and condescension which tempers His acts to meet our needs and requirements. And so, from the first to the last, from the beginning, from the foundation of the world “until the day break,” His light has been shining, shining through the darkest days, and it ever will shine, gradually dispersing the “shadows,” until they “flee away” for ever.

It is a stupendous thought ; one which makes a man shrink into nothingness ; one which humbles the proudest and the very best to the very dust ; one which the finite human mind fails to grasp ; one which we can take in but very faintly and feebly, as a “shadow” of the great truth ; *but*, nevertheless, one withal of inexpressible comfort and consolation, to feel that in the darkest times of the human race, as well as over the saddest heart of each man of that race, there has been, is, and ever will be, an all-powerful and an all-good God, watching, waiting, preserving, protecting, cleansing, purifying, “until the day break” until “the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head,” and “they shall obtain gladness and joy,” and the

shadows of "sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

First, then, I would have you notice that this gradual and ever-present development of God's love, as typified by light, was a work which commenced with the *natural* creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth, and the earth was without form," a huge shapeless mass, and "void," that is, empty, destitute of any living thing; and "*darkness* was upon the face of the deep." No sun, no moon, no stars, nothing but thick impenetrable darkness. But (blessed be God) God was there; "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." And "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was *Light*."

And then, as if so great a work should, so to speak, have a day to itself to mark its importance, so ended that day: "the evening and the morning were the first day." Then on the fourth day there was more light. Observe, how this gradual development of light is going on, "lights in the firmament of the heavens to give *light* upon the earth. And God made two great *lights*; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also." So, even "in the beginning," out of darkness and through the darkness the "shadows" fled away, and God's light *began* to shine.

Soon after, God made man to enjoy this light, and all other good things which God had prepared for him. "Eastward in Eden," where the sun rose, as if to put him in mind of the light which God gave, there He put the man whom He had formed. And this man Adam, whom God placed in this land of light, and for whom God had driven away the darkness which was upon the face of the deep, sinned grievously by disobeying God's commandment. See what follows! Through his sin he brought darkness upon his own soul, and death into the world, and the whole "world lay," as it is written, "in darkness and in the shadow of death, fast-bound in misery and iron," because Adam "rebelled (like the Israelites, who descended from him) against the words of the LORD, and lightly regarded the counsel of the most Highest."

But *even then* God was waiting to be gracious, even directly after Adam's sin, even when God was pronouncing the sentence of punishment against him and his tempters, *even then* out of evil God began to work good: out of this depth of spiritual darkness the Light, far off, was beginning to shine. There was a lifting of the shadows, the grey clouds were beginning to show the first faint streak of the coming dawn. Thus, *even then* was the first promise that the Light of the World should descend from the very woman who had done the dark deed of sin, even from her

the Light of the World Who should "bruise" the "heel of the Prince of Darkness."

Adam sinned, tempted by Eve. Eve sinned, tempted by the devil. And yet from Eve, through the blessed Virgin Mary, was born, at Christmas time, conceived by the Spirit of Light and Love, and born of Mary, JESUS CHRIST our LORD, GOD of GOD, Light of Light, Very GOD of Very GOD ! *This* was God's eternal purpose ; for as S. John says, " For this purpose the SON of GOD was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Four thousand long years were passing, as men reckon them, from this first promise of which I have just spoken, to the coming of the Light ; but many a token was there during that period that GOD had not " forgotten His people," by hiding His Face from them, and withdrawing the light of His countenance. This was shown to Moses when he saw the Light of the Burning Bush ; and again when he came down from the mount with the two Tables in his hand, and " behold the skin of his face *shone* : " this, to the Israelites in the pillar of fire which went before them by night " to give them *light*," for it was " the LORD that went before them ; " and this to Balaam, though he knew it not, when he prophesied, " There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob : " and this to Isaiah, when God inspired him to say, " The people that walked in darkness have seen ■ great Light : they that dwell in the land of

the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

And so the shadows were growing less and less, until the "Star of Jacob" became the star of the Nativity—the star which guided the wise men from the East, and "came and stood over where the Young Child was." O what a vision of Light and Beauty! Perhaps it was at early dawn. The night was far spent; the shadows were fleeing away; the day was breaking, when the blessed three ended their long journey and came to Him, of Whom all things from the beginning of the Creation spake, came to Him Who is the "Bright and Morning Star," the Divine Light our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. Truly was the great decree now fulfilled, "And God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light."

In the second place, notice the same dealings of God with His Church. To His Church also God said in the Person of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, typifying her by His Apostles, "Ye are the Light of the world," (S. John v. 14;) and yet He says of Himself, (viii. 12,) "*I am the Light of the world.*" Notice with love and awe, how He even as the God of light, thus *identifies* Himself with the Church—His Spouse. And so dimly for the four thousand years before the coming of our LORD, and brightly since and ever it has been the glorious mission of the Church to hold

the deposit, and proclaim the Light of God's truth. Like "a city set upon an hill," her "Light cannot be hid;" it may now burn more faintly, now more brightly; now it may be obscured, now it may blaze out; but it cannot be entirely hid. Error may dull it, infidelity may endeavour to extinguish it, heresy and schism, or dissent may oppress it, coldness, indifference, and lukewarmness, and unfaithfulness in its members may cause it to wane, even the patronage of fashion may serve to bring it into contempt; but in God's eternal purpose His Church is the Light of the world; and the day must come when these shadows which obscure her shall flee away, her day shall come when God shall "speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and her appointed time" (see margin,) "shall come, and her warfare shall be accomplished;" that time when God shall "gather together His elect from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of Heaven;" when the Church Militant here in earth, the Church that is engaged in her warfare against the powers of darkness, shall have become the Church Triumphant in Heaven.

Here too then is a great mercy, and token of God's long-suffering and patient watching for the souls of men, that God should have ordained such a Society as this Church of His; that He should have united it, joined it to, identified, made it one with, His Blessed Son; so that

none should be able to say (who are brought into contact with it), "Where is her light?" "Who will show us any good?" Because in His Church the LORD has vouchsafed to show "forth the Light of His countenance." There need be no room for doubt. From all times to all times there has been, there is, and there will be the One Church of GOD; differing, it may be, in minor details of teaching, but *one* in its oneness, one in the heritage of holy order, and of holy Sacraments, and Apostolic teaching. It is a very great mercy and blessing, and comfort to each of us to know that GOD has admitted us into this holy brotherhood; not the Priests only, but *all* baptized Christians; that He has so admitted us to these privileges, that we should be made parts of His Blessed SON, members of CHRIST, His own children, children of light, inheritors of Heaven, of the kingdom of light, for whom He has provided, and to the faithful of which He will give that kingdom "when the day breaks:" and, to whom *even now* He gives the title-deeds, as it were, of the glorious inheritance of the kingdom of light, our heavenly home.

In the last place think once more, my beloved brethren, of the history of each human heart. See, here too, this same great truth of the gradual developing and shining of GOD's light, not necessarily only in matters of belief, but also of holy living. Think how *there*, in that heart, GOD

commanded the light to shine out of darkness ; how He hath shined *there* to give the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God ;” how He has watched over it ; how, out of its thick darkness, God has first given it the illumination of Baptism ; how there He has constantly and unweariedly waited to be gracious to it, even when the “shadows” of the world, and the flesh, and the devil, and the darkness of sin, were beginning to overspread it. Think of this marvellous and tender care that God has for each heart of man, this giving of “good things” of the “Heavenly FATHER !” It is indeed a work of love, which it is hard for us to realize. It is, my brethren, really as great a work as the first creation—greater, if we may so say ; for “the earth was without form and void,” but “the heart of man” is—(by nature, not by grace,) “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. xvii. 9 ;) filled with the forms of every bad desire, and all wicked passions. And yet the All-pure and All-holy enlightens it, bears with it, has borne with it, will bear with it, until it is all His, “until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away !”

And then, again, there is that divine ray of God’s light, the light of conscience, which God has implanted in all men ; of that feeling in us which rightly understood, never fails to tell us with its secret whisper whether we are doing right or wrong ; of that “still small voice” which

sounds in our hearts like a faint murmur of the Voice of God, and checks us when we are going to do wrong; which sadly reproaches us when we have done wrong; and urges us, or persuades us lovingly, or alarms us, not to shun the light, but to avoid the darkness, or to amend the wrong done; which brings bit by bit before us—every circumstance of every sin, (if we will but look and listen to the “still small voice,”) and shows us how black it has been, and the light steals in, and the “shadows flee away,” and “the day breaks,” and we repent, and again rejoice in the light of the love of God.

One word more. It may help some of you even in this bright Christmas-tide. There is the dark night of trial to the faithful soul. Hard times, poverty, loss of relations, to be evil spoken of when we do not deserve it, to have those whom we love, and whom we would give our life to serve, look coldly upon us, home estrangements, sickness, doubts, distrust of God, coldness in our Communions, in our private prayers, our selfishness, and the thousand shadows with which God sees fit to surround us. Well, then, when any of these come upon us—and who among us has not at times been, or may not even now be, chilled by them, as by a cold mist wrapping us round?—Then let us take heart by grace, and try to look through them, (as we sing in our beautiful Advent hymn,) to the Sun of Righteousness—

“CHRIST the Sun, all ill dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.”

Yes, my brethren, He will drive them all away, however dense the gloom, however thick the darkness, however depressing the shadows, however wearisome the trial, however long the night of trouble seems, we must wait and trust “until the day break, and the Day Spring from on high shine upon us :” until the day break, and “then” the shadows will “flee away.”

Could we have a fitter text for this day? Is it not the very *key-note* to all the services of the season, I mean this gradual shining out of God’s Light? “until the day break, and the shadows flee away.” What a blessed truth to feel that the same God has brought us to the light of this Blessed Christmas Day; to feel that the same God who, from the beginning has been, as it were, preparing the world for this day, when the great Light of the world left His FATHER’S home and the Brightness of His presence, to come to us in this dark world of shadows; this day when our LORD JESUS CHRIST, without ceasing to be God, became Man for us, and was made Flesh, was born of a woman.

“Glad tidings” the Angels say, a glorious message is this to all people!—“glad tidings of great joy; for unto you,” unto us, “is born unto us this day in the city of David ■ SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD.”

If we have been keeping our Advent rightly, the more fit we are to enter into the joys of this Christmas ! If we have been trying to “cast off the works of darkness,” the more we shall now rejoice in our “armour of light.” See what we have been praying for in the collect all Advent through, and let us try to live in accordance with our prayers ! At this season of Love, and Peace, and Purity, and Holiness—for Christmas is a Holy time—let there be harmless recreation, and joyful mirth, but no rioting, no unseemly and senseless frivolity, no drunkenness, or gluttony. “Let your moderation be known to all men,” for the LORD is not only “at Hand,” but is come ; let there be no strife, quarrelling, and bitter words, for the Prince of Peace is come—“the day spring from on high hath visited us” to give us light, and to “guide our feet into the way of Peace.” Let there be no impurity in actions, or filthy talking, or even thoughts, for the Babe of Bethlehem, the Holy Innocent, on this day is born. And on this day above all days, as He has taken up His abode in your hearts, so let him dwell in you, and you in Him. You have received Him in His Blessed Sacraments into your souls ; keep Him there. Let Him abide and remain with you. His blessed Body and Blood will cleanse and guard your hearts from the shadows of sins, and they shall flee away, and the day shall break upon them.

Yes, indeed ! He in His Blessed Presence shall be like a light brightly shining there, which nothing but sin shall make dim : and the light will go on increasing,

“ His presence sheds *eternal* day,
On those prepared to meet Him.”

Then when our life is drawing to a close, when our “evening time is come,” it will not be to us the terrible looking-for of Judgment, of which we have been speaking so much in Advent, but like the going-out of the Wise Virgins, with our “lamps” lit, and with the “oil” of God’s grace in our vessels, with the light He gave us in Baptism, and the good works which by His grace shine in us, we shall go out to meet our LORD at His second and last coming.

And then, indeed, and in truth, the night will be past, and past for ever, the darkness gone, the shadows fled away, the dawn fully developed into the everlasting Day ! No longer we shall see Him then, as now, *only* by faith, but face to face ; no longer, as now, through a “glass darkly,” but as He is : He Who has been shining in our heart, amidst the shadows of sin, of pain, of sorrow, of sickness, of poverty, shall then shine for ever ; and “there shall be one day which shall be known to thee, not day nor night, but it shall come to pass that in the evening time it shall be light.”

And so that marvellous double truth, and yet

apparent contradiction in the Holy Scripture, shall be on the one hand fully revealed, on the other, reconciled. For it is written—*then* “The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but the LORD shall be unto thee an Everlasting Light, and thy God thy Glory :” and yet —“Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself”—and why ? because “the LORD shall be thine Everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

The shadows of Advent have passed into the light of Christmas : may the shadows of life, of your life and mine, pass into the light of a Blessed Eternity !

SERMON V.

Of the Octave of Christmas.

JESUS COMING UNTO "HIS OWN."

S. JOHN I. 11.

"HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM
NOT."

THERE is a sort of melancholy stress in the repetition of two words in this Text. He came unto *His own*, and *His own* received Him not. Let it be a warning message to us, even in the Octave of Christmas. It is fit that it should be so. *This day* is within the Octave, and the words of the Text form part of the Gospel for Christmas Day, and therefore for this Day. Nay more, they come from or form part of that Gospel, which is not only like all Gospels used in the Service of the Blessed Sacrament, in the Holy Communion Service, but they are to be found in that particular Gospel, which by reason of its extreme beauty, being, as it is, the casket of the Incarnation, is

used as the *second* Gospel of the Communion Service of the greater portion of Christendom.

So that we may have the less cause to excuse ourselves, when we meditate upon these touching words. Let us put it in this way, in order to try in a faint degree to appreciate, and set at their right value the meaning of these words; I mean, let us see in the first place, Who this was Who "came unto His own:" in the second, to whom He came: and last, why they, even "His own," refused to receive Him, or in other words, why, and how they, His own, rejected Him.

I do not mean that these should be the formal divisions of a set Sermon, but rather heads of such a Sermon as may help us to make a short meditation on this subject.

I. Who was this that came? It was CHRIST, the MESSIAH, "the desired," the long-expected "of nations;" but still more, it was the CHRIST the expected of "His own." It was the Word made Flesh. It was GOD made Man. It was the only-Begotten SON of the FATHER: begotten before all worlds, as the Eternal SON, and yet born in the world as the Son of Mary. Who was this that came? O help me, my God, to understand it. It was Very God of Very God: made man, born of a woman, taking bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh: stooping, condescending, abasing Himself, to assume to Himself a Human Nature, and so joining that Human Nature to the Divine Na-

ture, that of the Two Natures, there should be but One Person, CHRIST JESUS, GOD and Man.

Do you know what the result would be to a thoughtful mind to refuse to take this in? Why probably neither more nor less than rank, sheer infidelity : from which GOD in His mercy shield us now, and for ever ! Yes, indeed, we are forced upon Catholic Truth, to avoid Infidelity. Catholic Truth is the only intelligible, and available escape from Infidelity. O what a blessed, blessed Revelation from GOD to His Church is that glorious, resplendent awful living Truth, of the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST ! "By the mystery of Thy Holy Incarnation, and by Thy Holy Nativity, good LORD, deliver us."

Have I told you then Who this is who came? Yes, I have, and No I have not. Yes : for if I have told you that it was JESUS CHRIST, I have said enough : and No, because if I were to tell you, what was meant by the words, JESUS CHRIST ; if I were to tell you what was involved by these words, I should be forced on, and further to what is rightly called the "Mystery of the Incarnation," which is the key-note of Christianity : without which man could not have been saved : for JESUS could not have been crucified without being made Man, and without Bethlehem there could never have been Calvary ; without which man would have lacked union with GOD ; without which his soul would have been deprived of Spiri-

tual Food; for without the Incarnation, there could have been no Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of JESUS CHRIST.

He came then! came from the highest Heavens: came with healing in His Wings: came in so lowly a guise as to disarm all prejudice: came with a kind of mute appeal for love and sympathy: came in the helplessness of Infancy: came sending forth that feeble infant's cry, which in the hearts of the most hard-hearted finds, must surely find, some kind of echo: yes, that same cry, which should afterwards be the "loud voice" with which He gave up the ghost at Calvary: and yet again, that same cry which raised Lazarus from the grave, and shall call men to judgment. Yea, verily: great is the "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the Flesh," and "seen" and heard of, and dwelling among men!

II. Now let us take the Second Point. "He came unto His own." Unto His own! He came that is, to that particular nation whom He had chosen out of all mankind: chosen, not because they were mightier and more in number, or better in any respect than all, or any other people. Not so: for He came to them when they were the most despised of all people: He came to them when they were tributaries to a foreign nation, when conquerors from another land bore rule over them. He came submitting Himself to the law of the foreigner, even as

it were before His very Birth, when His Mother and foster-father came to be taxed by the decree of a foreign Emperor. He came then out of special Love, for those whom He had chosen: choosing them because He had set His Love upon them; and loving them, and calling them "His own" because He had chosen them. He came to them and claimed them for His own. His own, His very own peculiar people. Of their line and lineage He chose to be born: they were "His own," because He was theirs.

III. Now, the Third Point. See what follows: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." They refused to receive Him. They rejected Him. They would not and did not acknowledge Him. We will not, they say, "have this Man to reign over us." Or again, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Angels are bowing in adoration over the Manger Cradle. Gentile kings were come from afar off lands bringing their gifts of homage and faith. The very beasts of the stall acknowledged Him. The "ox" knew his Owner, and the "ass" his Master's Crib: but Israel did not know, "His own" people did not consider. For the LORD of all Creation there was "no room in the Inn!" His own refuse to receive Him, and the Virgin Mother gives birth to Him, the LORD of lords, and King of kings, in a Stable, because His own would not receive Him, and so the Stable becomes more

noble than the palace of an Earthly King, and the Manger more glorious than an Emperor's Throne!

And why did they refuse to receive Him? Nay, was it not that "their hearts were not whole with Him?" The very "things which should have been for their wealth, were unto them an occasion of falling:" their pride rebelled at that in Him, which they should have most prized, and most adored.—I mean His humility. Like Naaman of old, they would only be healed of their leprosy on their own terms. They looked for ■ MESSIAH. They looked for a CHRIST that should come. And when He came, and when "He came unto His own, His own received Him not." More, a million times more than they could have imagined in their wildest dreams or thought of in their fondest, proudest, imagination, was here fulfilled in this little Babe of Bethlehem: more of wisdom, more of might, more of Majesty. But yet "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not!"

Surely, my dearest brethren, there is one thought, which at least sometimes in Christmas-tide should occur, nay rather often recur to our minds: ■ thought, it appears to me, of great joy and brightness on the one hand, and yet one which makes us feel very sad on the other. Members of CHRIST as we are, it follows, in a very special sense, that we are CHRIST's "own."

We are more so even than those to whom He first came. There is something very touching in this application of that expression, or rather of that word, "His own." We are far more truly and really His own than being so by creation or even by His choosing us. We are His own, because we are united and joined to Him; nay, even for so it is written, and so indeed it must be, we are His own by being joined to Him, by being made "partakers" of "His Divine Nature!" We are so, "His own" as to share in His sufferings, and also in His glory. We are no longer *our* own. We are His. We are bought with a Price. For, remember, we may in some sense, look upon Bethlehem as Calvary. It is quite true to say that our LORD's Life on Earth, was as it were, a Sacred Drama, of which both Bethlehem and Calvary were separate acts. But they were separate acts of one and the same Mystery. We have a part and a share in all its stages. We are under all aspects belonging to Him as "His own," His very "Own," whether in the joy of Bethlehem or the sorrows of Calvary.

Well, then, while our hearts are very full of this thought: when we have learnt in some sense what it is for us to be "His own:" when we do at least sometimes realize how it is that He comes to us, how it is He dwells in us, speaks by us, thinks in us; *then* we feel how impossible it is, that that sad last half of the text could apply to

us. We feel it impossible that we could refuse to receive Him.

But, it is just because we do *not* keep this feeling alive in us: because we weaken or loosen, or even go near to sever our bond of union with Him, that we are in danger of refusing to receive Him. Here is our danger. Here must be our care. When He comes to us full of bright thoughts, full of the love of friends, full of prosperity, as indeed He *may* come, how gladly and eagerly we receive Him and welcome Him. But when He comes to us in trials, in sorrow, in the withdrawal of the good opinion of others, in poverty, in the ridicule of the world—then is our danger of refusing to see Him in these trials, and therefore of refusing to receive Him.

Far be this, far be this from us! Disguise Himself as He may, hide Himself as He may; for remember He is a hidden God—a God that hideth Himself, (as He expressly says,) let it be for us to seek Him and to welcome Him, to receive Him with open arms, and loving hearts. Let it be for us to claim the glorious promise which is contained in the very verse that follows our text. Indeed it was too true that He came unto "His own, and His own received Him not:" but equally true it is that, as it follows, to "as many as received Him, to them gave He power," (or as the margin reads, the right, the privilege) "to become the Sons of God; which were born

not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We *have* received Him. We have acknowledged the Babe of Bethlehem to be our LORD and our God. To us has He given this promise, or power, or right, or privilege. Let us cherish it: let us see that it bring forth its fruit in our lives. Let it make our lives CHRIST-like in their meekness, in their humility, in their self-denial, in a word in all the gifts and graces, and loving lessons of this Blessed Christmas-tide!

SERMON VI.

Feast of the Circumcision.

THE REPROACH ROLLED AWAY.

JOSHUA v. 9.

“THIS DAY HAVE I ROLLED AWAY THE REPROACH OF EGYPT FROM OFF YOU. WHEREFORE THE NAME OF THE PLACE IS CALLED GILGAL UNTO THIS DAY.”

THIS is a remarkable day for us, my brethren. It is the Octave of, or Eighth day after Christmas Day. Eight days ago, we began to commemorate the Nativity of our Blessed LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. Eight days ago we tried to place ourselves in the very Presence of that most Holy Infant, the Incarnate, the GOD-MAN: and for eight days, at every celebration of the Holy Communion up to this day we have not ceased, in the Proper Preface at that Service, to acknowledge that it was “meet, right, and our bounden duty to give thanks to GOD because He gave JESUS CHRIST to be born as at this time for us, and to be made

man of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother."

It is also the feast of the Circumcision of the same LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is the day on which for us men, He condescended to a lower depth of humiliation than even His very birth. True it is that on Christmas Day, the Word was made Flesh, that God became man, and took our nature upon Him, that He Who was from the beginning, Who was with God, Who was God, came forth from the bosom of the FATHER, and was born of a poor Jewish mother. True it is that our dear LORD took upon Him the form of a poor helpless infant; but equally, and as mysteriously, and wonderfully true it is, that this day He condescended to be circumcised, as if He had been a sinner. He condescended in His humility to undergo, that is, a rite, which should prove that He, the All-holy, and the Sinless, had taken upon Him not only the form of a man, but also the form of a sinner, taken not only our human nature, but our sinful and our suffering human nature.

To-day then, first He the God-Man *seals* the compact between God and man. He makes by the shedding of His Blood, the first great step as it were, to the reconciliation between man and his Maker. He fulfils all righteousness. To-day at the very outset and beginning of His life as man amongst men, He gives an earnest and pledge of man's Redemption. To-day, in the

very first days of His life on earth, He sheds the first drops of blood, drawn by the knife of the Circumcision, from the same Sacred Body, which afterwards on the Cross, when all should be "finished" should flow out in a mixed stream, at the thrust of the spear. To-day, He as the true Law-giver, of whom Moses was the type, yea, as He Who was the author of all law, yet, being "made under the law," He was obedient to the law. To-day, though He appears a little child, a little infant, yet is He endowed with perfect foreknowledge; though He is clothed with human flesh, yet with that flesh of a nature so pure as to be exquisitely and beyond all conception sensitive to pain. Yet even to-day He was willing, to suffer as it were the first fruits, the anticipation of the Agony of the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Cross of Calvary.

To-day, also, to Him was given that Name above every name, that predicted Name Divine and human, that Name of infinite might, majesty, power, was given Him to-day; and yet that Name of sweetness, gentleness and mercy; that Name which is the Name of "God with us" as the SAVIOUR to save us from the just wrath of the FATHER, and also to deliver us from our sins. Yes, to-day He was circumcised, in the cave of Bethlehem, to "roll away the reproach of Egypt from off His people!"

But yet again, we must not forget that this is

Sunday.¹ It is the LORD's Day. The day on which GOD first said, "Let there be light, and there was light." This is the day on which, according to very early tradition, and learned authors, CHRIST was born, and therefore also the day upon which He was circumcised. This was the day, therefore, again it follows, on which the Light of the world came to His own, to be a light to lighten its and their darkness, the day upon which the Sun of Righteousness arose, and the great shadows of sin and misery, and the thick mists of error, by Him were "rolled away."

And yet once more, you will easily remember another mark of this day. It is one indeed, of which the Church takes no direct cognizance, but still one of which by her preachers for many years past, she takes from the world and endeavours to spiritualize for her children. It is the first day, as the world reckons it, of the New Year. My brethren, never could a New Year fall on a more auspicious day, fall more happily. Never could we have a better chance of beginning it with better thoughts. Falling as it does on such a day as this, it seems so overwhelmed with blessings, and hedged about with holy teachings, and guarded by sacred warnings, and fortified by suggestive thoughts, and filled with opportunities for making good resolutions! Yes, all things coincide, and

¹ This sermon was preached when the Feast of the Circumcision fell on ■ Sunday.

work together, to lift us up, and away out of the darkness of the Egypt of this world, and to fill us with an overwhelming sensation of the love and goodness of the All-Merciful. We may indeed if we will, even now, and here, in this House of God, and at this time we may almost hear a voice saying in the words of the text, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you ; wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day."

Yes ! this is the octave of Christmas Day, this day is the Feast of the Circumcision : it is Sunday, the LORD's Day, and it is the first day of the New Year.

And now you notice too how our text seems to suit this coincidence. CHRIST our LORD as at this Christmas-tide, "rolled away," as it were, the curse, the "reproach of Egypt," that is, of the sins, under which lay the human race.

By His Circumcision He "rolled away" the mass of impurity and defilement by which the human race is surrounded, and by which it is infected.

CHRIST the Light of the world shone into the hearts of men, and "rolled away" and back from them, the darkness of sin and infidelity !

Then again, this beginning of the New Year seems to remind us half sadly, of those waves of time, rolled back on the shore of our past lives, never to return, bringing to our memories so

many mercies to be thankful for, so many sorrows turned into blessings, so many dangers seen and unseen escaped, so many assaults of Satan repelled, so many that we look back at the reproach "rolled away" with awe and wonder and thankfulness. And once more, this same beginning of the New Year bids us look forward with hope; it induces and encourages us to take courage, and be up and doing, for we must not forget that time after all is a fraction of eternity, that the days which make up the years of our life are parts of that great whole which are by God's permission, in any way within our control.

But let us examine the text a little more nearly, and if I mistake not, there are some hidden mysteries of teaching in it, which should very much attract and interest us, and far better still, may be useful and fruitful to us.

"This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you; wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day."

The points we gather in reviewing the text are these. God spoke these words to Joshua. They were spoken as it were through him, to the children of Israel. They were spoken after their escape from their bondage in Egypt, and just before their entering into the promised land, the land which the LORD swore that He would give them, the "land that floweth with milk and honey."

It really is no ingenious straining of the meaning of these words to apply them to ourselves. There are no figures or types amongst them which are not most common in Holy Scripture.

You know for instance, that the name Joshua, is nearly the same as that of our LORD JESUS. You know that the children of Israel are the types of Christians, the true "Israel of God." You know that their escape from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh, and their passage of the Red Sea, are typical of our deliverance from Satan, by the application of the merits of our SAVIOUR'S Blood in our Baptism. You know that the wanderings in the wilderness of the children of Israel are a figure of our wanderings in the world. You know that Jordan stands in Holy Scripture for a type of death, and the land of Canaan of heaven.

So, knowing this, now we may carry our teaching one step higher. At our Baptism, our spiritual Circumcision, when we were made Christians, and took the name of JESUS upon us, we renounced and cut off our connection with the world, the flesh and the devil,—but alas! in our wanderings in the wilderness of the world, we again and again, (alas! how often let each one say for himself) contracted the defilement and impurity of sin. Though the "reproach" has been once "rolled away" from us, yet it is only really and truly when we have crossed the Jordan, and are on the shores of

the land of Canaan ; when, that is, we have passed through Death, and are within sight of Heaven, that the second Circumcision takes place, when there is an utter cutting off of the sins of the flesh, it is on *that* day, when alone it becomes fully and really and intensely true, “ This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.”

But in its lower and more limited sense : though this “ reproach ” has been once “ rolled away,” yet we know that many of us by living in sin, have become more or less uncircumcised, and have wandered away from God. We have broken our covenant with Him. Hence a great practical question remains. Let us conclude with it. It is this. What are we each one of us doing for ourselves, to get this reproach “ rolled away ? ” or rather, how are we using the grace God gives us ? What resolutions have we made for the year, which with this day commences ? Have we made one ? What sin are we going to give up ? I do not ask whether we are going to lead *better lives* ; for that, much as it sounds, means very little. It is too indefinite. But what *one* great sin are we going to set to work to attack ? Have we no one sin in particular, which not only checks our spiritual life, but is actually growing upon us, and eating our spiritual life out of us, and unless it is “ rolled away ” is running us into risk of everlasting punishment ? What ! no selfishness ? conceit ?

pride? irritability of temper? no dishonesty in our business? no impurity? or drunkenness? no sloth or laziness? no love of slander, gossiping, carelessness, irregular, unsystematic life? O surely one or more of these!

Let us ask God for grace to roll away these spots and stains and corruptions, and reproaches of our daily life. Perhaps not *one* of us has given way or is prone to them *all*, but we *all* are sure to be more or less entangled by one or more of these reproaches, these sins, which are a reproach upon God, as well as a reproach to ourselves, for they make of no avail the purpose which God had in our Creation, and in our Redemption.

We could not make a better start than with to-day. If pride, or conceit, or vanity beset us, let us think of our dear LORD's humiliation in His Birth at Christmas. If disobedience, or any rebellious conduct in our Church, or social, or family lives, let us think of His obedience in the Circumcision. If we are tempted to be restless, or to despair, at the thick clouds of sorrow, or sin closing round upon us, let us look through them, to CHRIST our Light, born for us on the day of light, the blessed LORD's Day.

Let us be able to look back upon this day when it is passed ■ the Gilgal, the place where our "reproach" was beginning again to be "rolled away," the place where we regained our *liberty*, (for that is the meaning of the word,) from the

thralldom of sin, on which we began a life more devoted to the service of God. Let us be able to point back in after life, to *this*, as the day on which we made, and afterwards kept, a solemn, sacred resolution to cut ourselves off, at whatever cost, from such and such a particular sin, and so began to grow in grace, and to increase in the love of God, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

SERMON VII.

Sunday after Christmas Day.

SONSHIP IN CHRIST.

GAL. IV. 7.

"WHEREFORE THOU ART NO MORE A SERVANT, BUT A SON ; AND
IF A SON, THEN AN HEIR OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST."

THE text is taken from the Epistle for this day. It brings before us another fruit of the Incarnation of the SON of GOD, our LORD JESUS CHRIST. When GOD became man, then was man's relationship toward GOD changed. A change passed over the whole human race. Before the first Christmas Day, the human race was not only in a certain sense in a state of spiritual bondage, but it stood as it were, in the position of slaves to GOD. Then GOD's "Service" was *not* "perfect freedom." Between GOD and man the covenant or compact was *then* that of debt or service. GOD was the master and man the servant. It was the Infancy of mankind and especially of the seed of Abraham ;

and although even then all created human beings, and especially God's chosen people the Jews, were and were called God's children, and sons of God, yet it was really, and truly, and in its fullest sense, only when God the SON, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, took upon Him our nature, that He, being the SON of God, became our Brother, and so we, and the Jews, and all mankind, through Him were placed in a new and changed relationship to God.

But further, and beyond all this, we should be careful to remember another fact. It is this, namely, that though all created human beings are in some sense the sons of God, from the very fact of their being created by Him: yet that we Christians in addition to our being sons of God, in this sense, are by virtue of our Baptism, incorporated into the Body of CHRIST, just in the same way as a graft in a tree is inserted into and becomes part of that tree. Hence it follows that because we have been grafted into CHRIST by our Baptism, we became parts or members of CHRIST: and CHRIST being the SON of God, we became Sons or children of God: and CHRIST being the only begotten SON of God, and so His Heir, or Inheritor, so we ourselves also became heirs and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And this is the meaning of the Epistle for this day, "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors,

until the time appointed of the Father. Even **we**, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world : but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His SON, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Therefore thou art no more **a** servant, but **a** son ; and if a son, then an heir of God, through CHRIST."

A most wonderful Christmas teaching surely, is this ! It cannot err, for God Himself, Who is the Truth, has taught it to us. It is one, perhaps, most difficult to realise. It is hard to see, and our natural weakness and the infirmity of our human nature, shrinks from grasping and making it our own. But still it is true. True in **a** degree of all, but absolutely and exactly true of each baptized person. Not only was the whole human race affected by the Incarnation, but also each individual of it who has been baptized, has been translated from a lower, not only to a higher, but to the highest, and not only to a closer, but the closest degree of relationship to God. No more a "servant," but a "son !" Not only a "son," but an "heir !" Not only an heir, but a "joint heir," placed in such a position as to participate in, and to share, if we may dare **to** speak, in the Incar-

nation of the SON of GOD :—to become a partaker of the nature of Him Who is GOD the SON, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, our GOD—and yet our Brother !

Hence it follows from this great mystery, that our fresh relationship brings fresh duties, fresh blessings, fresh privileges indeed, and also increased responsibilities.

The fulness of time has come. GOD has sent forth His SON, made of a woman. Born of the Virgin Mary, made under the Law. As concerning the flesh an Israelite : made and sent to redeem those who were under the Law : and made and sent that the Gentiles, that is we ourselves, should glorify GOD for His mercy. And why ? not only that He should reconcile the FATHER to, and redeem us, but also that we might receive the adoption, the position, the relationship, the privileges, and also the responsibilities of sons.

Now we see how it is that our “service of GOD,” is turned into “perfect freedom ;” our slavery into liberty, our fear into love. This is how it is that *because* we are sons, GOD hath sent forth the Spirit of His SON into our hearts, so that we may call Him FATHER, a FATHER not only by Creation, but by a far higher and nearer and closer title, “our FATHER,” our FATHER by adoption, because He is the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who is our Brother.

What a perfect solution and explanation this

appears to be of the many difficulties which are needlessly raised in the minds of some at the present day. I do not mean difficulties, or perplexities, raised by open and avowed and vicious infidels, but by those who speak (as they think learnedly, and philosophically in fine long words) of the "education of the world," and the "perfectibility of the human race," and the "march of intellect," of that intellect which is not ostensibly at least, to overthrow, but to *correct* Christianity, and bring it within the bounds of reason, and to make it consistent, and compatible with, or conformable to a "Gospel according to the nineteenth century," so pure, so refined, so cleared of superstition, so spiritualized, that man is to become an angel without a God, and there is to be a heaven on earth, where reason may reign supreme, and faith is totally to disappear !

Now we may always take this for something like a maxim in religious matters, namely that all heresy, all philosophical infidelity, may be, or nearly always is, the perversion, or the exaggeration of some truth. And therefore that in all systems outside the Catholic Church, there is a sort of residuum of what is good and right, and true. In some systems more, in some less. How is it then, that these systems are so erroneous, or even vicious? Why, simply because there is no balance, or as we may call it, or indeed, as Holy Scripture calls it, no "proportion of the faith ;"

The truth is that there is but one thing wanting, and wanting that, it lacks all. In the Catholic Church each doctrine has its defined place. Outside of it there must be error either in excess or in defect. It is with the Spiritual Body as with the natural body. In the Catholic Church the spiritual body is, as it were, well-shapen in all its limbs, each part exercising its proper functions, and all in due and just proportion, and dependent, but outside of it, however nearly any other system may approach the truth, yet it must err: the defect may be flagrant or it may be concealed, yet malformation, or deformity there *must* be somewhere. There is sure to be either some monstrous outgrowth, or some joint or link missing.

Be well assured, that a great part or perhaps all of this comes from the want of a thorough grasp, (as far as it is given to man,) of that great central and fundamental truth of religion, "the believing rightly," as the Creed of S. Athanasius has it, "The Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," "for the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, is GOD and Man. Perfect GOD and perfect Man." Upon these two points, which after all are but one, all Christianity is based, and so all true religion hinges: this is the Foundation upon which the mighty, glorious superstructure of the Catholic Church has been raised and is sustained. This is the missing link in all false, or

semi-false systems of religion. And for this reason, that once believing this, we cannot stop ourselves from also believing what is deduced from it. In other words there is no one doctrine of the Catholic Church, which may not be traced to it.

Hence, if we believe rightly the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, we must believe, or we are in the right way to believing all, and everything. It is indeed the key to each and all the mysteries, and even to the commonplace everyday teachings of Religion. By it, we can understand how that human nature, is not only "perfected" as your philosophers talk and teach, but taken into the Godhead itself and so "perfected" *because* so taken up. Nay, further that each member of that race is by a process arising out of and flowing from the Incarnation, joined to Him, the Incarnate, to Him that is, who being the Only Begotten Son of God, causes that each individual being made by baptism a member of Himself, each becomes an *adopted* Son of God.

But these, my brethren, are matters we must not now linger upon. Ordinarily speaking and simple as they sound, they are matters so high for us, that we must be of those who would fain keep their souls low, as a child weaned from his mother. Nevertheless, Christmas, with its high and holy teaching, does indeed more or less force these mighty glorious truths upon us. And well indeed is it that it should be so !

Great as is the mystery of Godliness, of God manifest in the flesh, wonderful and blessed truth as is the Incarnation and our adoption as the Sons of God, mystery as it is, sounding as it does the very depths of Theology, yet our text is not of course without its devotional and practical lesson : nay rather it is full of dogma and therefore full of devotion, full of faith, but of a living faith which must show itself not on our lips only, but in our lives.

Let us think then with awe, and humility, with love and profound thankfulness, with joy and exultation, let us each take it home individually and separately to himself ! Let each say : God in my baptism has made me His Son. I had no right or title to claim it from Him. Of His own pure and free will, of His mercy and lovingkindness, He first called me into being, and He has adopted me. I am no more, thanks to the application of the Incarnation and Death, the Birth and precious Blood of CHRIST, to me in my Baptism, "I am no more a servant, but a son !" He has called me to grace and privilege beyond even what He vouchsafed to the holy men of old, the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Covenant. They were His children in a certain sense, His sons, His friends, (as Abraham) indeed, but I in a very especial manner. God has indeed provided for me, "some better thing, than they without" men, without this miserable insignificant creature *my-*

self, “should not be made perfect.” Great as were the Patriarchs, and prophets, the holy men of old, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the Church of CHRIST is in a certain sense greater than they.

Nay further, I may say, GOD has made me His heir, He has given me in my baptism the title deeds of my inheritance. He has given me, He is always giving me, grace to keep them. He has made me an heir of Heaven, that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled ; made me heir not of earth, not of possessions which endure for a while, and which moth or rust may corrupt, and thieves may steal, but one which none can take away, when but once it is reached. He has made me an heir of Heaven. And what is Heaven, but the unveiled presence of GOD ? therefore, in giving me Heaven, He gives me Himself ! The possession of GOD is the crowning bliss of Heaven. Even of that He has made *me* an heir !

Am I living the life of one whom GOD has so called and so blessed ? Am I living as one whom He has not only made His son and His heir, but one whom He vouchsafes to feed with the most precious food of the Body and Blood of His only Begotten SON.

And indeed I may say more, I may say, that *this* is true of me : GOD speaks to *me* when He says, “ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son : and if a son then an heir of GOD through CHRIST.” GOD forbid that I should do, say, or

think aught which should rob me of mine inheritance, and cause me to be disinherited! O what cause for joy, when I think of Him, but when I think of myself as I am what cause for sorrow, and shame, and humiliation! Let me say, "I will arise and go to my FATHER, and say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Still Thou art my FATHER, and I am Thy son. Thy son and joint heir with Thy SON, joined to and accepted in Him Who is the Beloved, Thy only Begotten SON, my LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

SERMON VIII.

Epiphany.

THE LEADING OF THE STAR.

S. MATTH. II. 2.

“WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST, AND ARE COME TO
WORSHIP HIM.”

THE history of this blessed Festival very nearly concerns us. It more nearly concerns us, perhaps, in one sense than even Christmas. We have, it is true, a part and a share in Christmas. The Incarnation of our blessed LORD JESUS CHRIST is everything to us; but we have a special part and a special share, beyond and above even God's first chosen people, in the Epiphany.

And this is how it comes about. CHRIST our LORD was born for all, as He died for all, and in that “*all*” (thanks be to God) each one of us is included. But the special point of the Epiphany is, as it is called in our Prayer Book, the Manifestation of CHRIST to the *Gentiles*. So that on

this day, and in this festival, we have the great and glorious pledge that "the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise" of the HOLY SPIRIT "in CHRIST, by the Gospel." And who are these Gentiles but ourselves in contradistinction to the Jews? though, indeed, in another sense, we Gentiles by birth become by adoption in Baptism the true "Israel of God."

To-day, then, we commemorate our own admittance to pay homage in the courts of our Infant King! To-day we claim our right to be numbered amongst His subjects. To-day in these Gentile kings we yield our allegiance, and do token of fealty to the King of kings, and acknowledge His sovereignty. To-day, early this morning, in them we saw His "star in the east," and I trust came "to worship Him."

It is a wonderful and a touching history, this history of the Epiphany. It is wonderful in its fulfilment of that wonderful prophecy of Isaiah where it is written, "And the Gentiles shall come to Thy Light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." What was this Light but the "star," and who was this "King" but JESUS? It is wonderful to think that that tiny ray should kindle such a fire of faith and love: wonderful to think that that "Little One" should become as "a thousand," and that "small One a strong nation." It is wonderful to think that the little Infant JESUS, so despised,

and as it were cast aside, that Little One, for Whom, with His mother, there was "no room in the inn," should be the magnet to draw these kings from afar, to "come and worship Him." It is passing wonderful to think of their faith triumphing over all obstacles, and not discouraged by any checks, to think not only of their faith, but their enduring faith, persevering even to the end; and wonderful also to think of the reward of that faith, the Blessing of the Presence of JESUS.

GOD so willed it that as in Judæa to the few shepherds, so in the east to three Gentile kings should be announced the birth of the "SAVIOUR which is CHRIST the LORD." But the faith of those kings was, I think we may say, greater than that of the shepherds. The shepherds had many aids to their faith. They saw an angel, *the* angel, an archangel first, and then they heard his message, and then beyond this they heard the angelic choir singing their "*Gloria in Excelsis*." See how it is written: "Suddenly there was with *the* angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the Highest." Naturally enough the shepherds said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us."

The shepherds indeed made haste: they had faith, and were of a ready mind; they were not "disobedient to the heavenly vision," but "came

with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." So far they did well, right well!

But these wise men, these Gentile kings, surely did better. They came from a far country. They had no such tradition, probably, as the Jews would have of the birth of a Messiah. They saw the star, they followed the star, for the star was to them as the Angel of the Nativity. Still the star was not an angel, nor an archangel, much less "a multitude of the heavenly host." Still they followed!

But when they reached Jerusalem, the royal city, they saw the star no longer. Their guide had deserted them. Still they persevere, they inquire, they are instant in their search; all their energies and efforts are directed to it. They are not to be turned aside. Their one thought, all their one inquiry is, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" All their one pledge, all the stock in trade of their faith is, "We have seen His star in the East." All their one earnest, longing, loving, overwhelming, heart-felt desire is to "come to worship Him"—Him who was "born King of the Jews."

But let us follow them further. Again they resume their journey, and again they find their guide. "Lo, the star"—the star which they saw in the East—"went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was." Where

was that? Where was He who was “born King of the Jews,” and King of the Gentiles? Where was He who is King of kings and Lord of lords? Cradled in a manger, amongst the beasts of the stall, with no other palace than ■ hovel, an out-house, ■ cavern, a place in which almost an animal might take shelter, with no other attendants than a few shepherds, a carpenter, and ■ lowly Maiden!

Once more: let us see what follows. We read that when they “saw the star”—that is, saw it stand still, they knew that their heart’s desire was fulfilled; they needed no angel to tell them that their mission was accomplished, and they “rejoiced with exceeding great joy,” a joy of anticipation, for they had not yet seen the object of their worship. Their faith was so full and so fervent, that they were not discouraged at the aspect of the wretched stable of the inn, but they enter the house; and “when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him.”

Let us observe again that it was not only the sight of the young Child, but the sight of the young Child with Mary His mother. Him only they worshipped, but it was the sight of them *both* which caused them to worship *Him*. Truly that must have been ■ sight to stir and melt the heart—the sight of the young Child with Mary His mother! the Infant SAVIOUR in the arms of the

Maiden-Mother ! See how the thought of JESUS leads us to the thought of Mary. Dearest brethren, let us never give her less honour and love than is her due, for that is to dishonour her SON ; and her SON is both her and our SAVIOUR, and our GOD. We cannot really love the Child without loving the Mother ; we cannot rightly and duly love the Mother without loving the SAVIOUR.

But to return. Then they “ opened their treasures,” and they made their offerings, and they presented to Him their gifts, “ gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” They offered those gifts which told their own tale—told of their Faith in His Majesty as a King, in His power as God, in His suffering as Man. “ The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto Thee,” says the Prophet, “ the multitude of camels shall cover Thee : the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come ; they shall bring gold and incense ; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD.” And so again the Psalmist : “ The kings of Tharsis and the isles shall give presents ; the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts ; all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall do Him service.”

And so CHRIST was “ manifested to the Gentiles,” and so the Gentiles were by anticipation taken into covenant with God ; and so JESUS was proclaimed LORD both of Jew and Gentile, as the same “ LORD over *all*, Who is rich in mercy to-

ward *all* them that call upon Him." Blessed be JESUS for His loving-kindness to *all*, without distinction of nation, rank, age, condition, sex or person, Jew or Gentile, king or shepherd, all were alike to His love !

Let us take the following heads as special points for our imitation in the example of these wise men or Magi, these Gentile kings. Or in other words, let us take them as special graces which we should seek from God, as on this Day—I mean the graces of faith, of courage, and of perseverance.

We may follow their faith in their unhesitating following the leading of the star. We may follow their courage in boldly proclaiming the object of their search, even in the palace of Herod. We may follow their perseverance in surmounting all obstacles, even that most trying one of the withdrawal of their visible guide; that trying time when, having walked by sight, they were obliged to "walk" no longer "by sight," but "by faith."

Without going too much into generalities, and so, more or less, losing ourselves, could we not take these virtues, and exercise them in our search after JESUS? for though we have, I trust, each and all of us, found Him, found and tasted how precious He is, yet, strange to say, we have ever and ever to search for Him, year by year, day by day, hour by hour, of our lives, we must seek and search !

Yes, that Star of Faith is ever journeying on, leading and alluring us on by its bright, gentle shining. At times it shines out brightly and brilliantly. At others it is obscured by the mists of sorrow, or sin, sometimes even to the point of our almost losing sight of it altogether. Sometimes, indeed, God wills in His own wise and loving purpose, and in no way that we can account for, to hide Himself from us, and withdraw His Face from us for a season. Well then, and even then, and above all then, we must not be discouraged. It is only a trial of our faith. We must journey on, and never relax, much less despair. We must journey on and on, until at length that Star shall indeed stand out, not where the young Child in His humiliation is, but the God-Man in His glory. *That* will only be when of His mercy we shall attain that place of bliss, to reach which we stand, I repeat, in special absolute need of the great graces of Faith, and Courage, and Perseverance; Faith to trust God in all things, Courage to triumph over all obstacles and hindrances, and Perseverance to endure to the end, that blessed end, to which may the loving mercy of God bring us, by paths which are hard to follow, by paths which are strait, and narrow, but still by paths which lead to Eternal Life, and undimmed Light, and unending Glory. Amen.

SERMON IX.

Octave of the Epiphany.

JESUS MANIFESTED TO US.

PSALM VIII. 1.

“O LORD OUR GOVERNOR, HOW EXCELLENT IS THY NAME
IN ALL THE WORLD.”

WE are within the Octave of the great and happy Festival of the Epiphany, or the Manifestation of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST to the Gentiles : a Feast which we may look upon as a sort of supplement to Christmas, celebrated twelve days after, but commemorating probably the events of the great Day of the Nativity itself. We must note especially that this day of the Epiphany was the day of the *first* Manifestation of our LORD CHRIST to the Gentiles, the day on which it was said not only to the *Jewish* shepherds (abiding in the field and keeping watch over their flock by night) “unto *you* is born,” but a day in which *we* too have a special claim, for not to the Jews

only, but also to the Gentiles, “unto *us* is born ■ SAVIOUR which is CHRIST the LORD.” It *needed* indeed, my brethren, (as I have had occasion to say before) such a day as *this* to include *us*, to show, as the Epistle of the Festival says, that *we* of “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in CHRIST, by the Gospel.”

But not only so. This Manifestation of our Blessed LORD’S Sovereignty was not thus limited. To-day, for each day of the Octave, as to-day, not only the Gentile Kings, not only these wise men from the East, but all creation paid homage to the Infant SAVIOUR, Who was not only the King of the Jews, but the King of the whole earth : the King of Angels, the King of Heaven.

And so, *all* seem to gather round the Manger of Bethlehem. This is a point which often seems to be overlooked. But see, how from the Jewish nation came the Shepherds, from the Gentiles came the Wise men : from the celestial bodies, from the very stars themselves, came the “Star :” from the Heavenly Jerusalem came the Heavenly Host of Angels : even from the very irrational Creation came the beasts of the stall : out of the bowels of the earth, was brought the Gold : from its surface were offered the Incense and the Myrrh.

And to Whom did all these come ? to Whom indeed ! Most beautifully says the great Fulgentius (an early Latin writer) “*Who* is this King of

the Jews? Poor and yet rich : humble and yet sublime : the little Infant borne in the arms of His Mother, and yet upholding the world by His Power : clothed in rags, but ordering the stars : confined within the narrow compass of a manger-cradle, and yet the LORD, whom the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain.” “O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world : Thou that hast set Thy glory above the Heavens !”

But true indeed as it is, that now, at His Birth or rather at His Manifestation He showed Himself as the LORD and the Governor, so also, throughout His life, and even at His death, all created things give testimony and bear witness to and own the power of their Creator, and He manifests His power in all, and over all. “The Heavens declared the glory of God ; by sending forth the star : the Sea upbears Him when He plants His footsteps on its mighty waters. The Wind and the Storm obey Him. The fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, the beasts of the earth, own Him for their Master. Or again, see how by the utterance of His Name of Power, on the one hand He calms the fears of His Disciples, or on the other He strikes His foes with awe and terror to the ground ! Take those two instances, of the stilling of the Storm, and the Apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane. To His disciples, “*It is I, be not afraid.*” But to

His enemies, “as soon as He said to them, *I am He*, they went backward and fell to the ground.” Or again, think how when as Man He died, all creation felt the shock, the *earth* trembled and quailed: the *sun* was darkened, and the moon refused to give her light: think how at the hour of His Death, the *rocks* and the veil of the temple were rent: the *grave* gave up its dead; things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth, even the very devils at the mention of His name trembled. See how all in some way recognise, and testify to the power of the God-Man: nay of the God-Infant: of the CHRIST-Child. “O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world!”

A grand Psalm is this 8th Psalm! It is indeed one of the Psalms, appointed by the Church for Ascension Day, but it has a true Christmas and Epiphany ring about it nevertheless!

We may well imagine it in the mouths of the wise men. At least we may imagine it in their hearts. They knew not indeed the letter, but they acted fully in the spirit of it. Kings though they were, yet they asked for the abode of their King. “Where is He,” say they, “Who is born King of the Jews?” They sought Him in Jerusalem, in the Royal City, and there they found Him not. True of Him, as of His forerunner, S. John Baptist, His dwelling place was not a King’s Palace, nor His attendants courtiers, nor His

clothing soft raiment; but even in thee, "O Bethlehem, in the land of Judea," now no longer the "least of the princes of Juda," out of thee "shall come," nay now *has* come, "a Governor that shall rule My people Israel." There CHRIST was born: and there too His glory was manifested! There the Eastern kings bowed down in worship before Him! In a lowly shed, of that obscure town, there the blessed Mother brought forth her first born Son, and she called His Name—(O Name of wonder!)—JESUS, for He was born to save His people from their sins. "O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world: Thou that hast set Thy glory above the heavens!"

But once more, not only by His Cross of Passion, not only by His Precious Death but even now by His Incarnation, in His Infancy, by His Birth, the SON of GOD is manifested, that is by His Epiphany, to destroy the works of the Devil. "Out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings, hast Thou ordained strength (it is written in the Psalm) and perfected praise." And why? Because of Thine *enemies*. Not only because the enemies of Thy manhood, the Chief Priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, even Thine own nation, but also because of our great Enemy, "that Thou mightest" overcome and "still" even him, the "Enemy" of our souls, the "Avenger."

But see further the depth of love and the condescension, the unsearchable riches of CHRIST. See how He manifests Himself in meekness, in lowliness, in humility. He took not on Him the nature of *angels*, but of *man*. Even for us, and for our salvation, He was made man. He abased Himself, that He might exalt us. And so He seeks from us, as He sought from those Gentile Kings, lowly worship, that we might be honoured of Him, in the presence of men and of angels. And so it is written in this Psalm, "LORD, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him: Thou madest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship." So may we continue in the spirit of the Psalm: Even here on earth Thou committest unto man power and authority and rule. Thou hast created him in Thine image, and so by virtue of this likeness to Thee, "Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of Thy Hands, and Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet: all sheep and oxen: yea, and the beasts of the field: the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the sea." And still further may we say: Thou hast given him the rule over himself, over his passions, over his lusts and appetites. Thou hast conquered and subdued him, that in Thee he might also conquer himself. "I can do all things," says S. Paul, "through

CHRIST that strengtheneth me." And again, "Not I, but the grace of God, which is in me," and by the Name of JESUS which I bear. "O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world."

Is it not well, my dear brethren, that we observe and keep these holy seasons, since they are the caskets which enshrine these great truths and since they bring them visibly before us? And this is why we try to show the LORD special honour even by outward resources at these times. We care only for Music, or Decoration, or Incense, or Vestments, or lowly Postures of body, in so far as they subserve the great object, and inasmuch as they are means to an end, that is to bring our souls into the attitude which they should have to our LORD and Governor, to make us not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind; in a word that they should make us such as, that we may "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," our LORD and Governor; that we may "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," as our "Governor," as unto Him by Whose Name we are called. It is this which God expects of us. It is this which is our "reasonable service."

You cannot make too much of these great days of the Church. In proportion as a thing is right, and holy and helpful to our souls, in the same

proportion will the Devil, the World and the Flesh fight against it. This is true to a certain degree in all systems of religion. This is just the history of the week day Festivals.—It so happens, that the Feast of the Epiphany, and to-day its Octave, fall on a Sunday. Had it not been so, I wonder what proportion of this large congregation now present would have celebrated the Epiphany or Manifestation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST,—a Festival which the Church has ordered to be observed with special honour.

Remember this as a caution to yourselves. With the dropping out of these holy Days, dropped out the holy Doctrines enshrined in them and preserved by them,—dropped out also the very vital truths of religion. When the Church commenced to lower her standard to the world, then, and to that extent, her teaching was injured and holiness of life impaired; then she admitted another Lord and Governor over her, then she placed herself under another Government.

And what is true of the Church, is true of each one of us as individual Christians or Churchmen. Once lower the standard, once be content with neglecting Holy Days like this, and you admit a fresh ruling principle into your hearts, you are governed by public opinion, or by pleasure, or by vice, or by self-will, or self-indulgence, or indolence. You cannot then say with heart and soul “O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy

Name" to *me*. Excellent in all the world, and above all the world, to *me*!

But rather let me, in conclusion, counsel you on the other hand, affectionately and earnestly, not for a time, but continually, perseveringly at all hazards, at any self-sacrifice, at the loss of friends and prospects, to cleave close to Him, to offer yourself to Him, to follow Him with your eyes in His life on earth, (which indeed is only in other words the annual course of the Church's teaching.) Look upon Him, and look up to Him, as the eyes of a maiden wait upon her mistress! If you really did this you would find indeed that there is nothing like working and living for JESUS, that though He is a Master and a Governor, yet also that He is a Friend, a Brother, and the Lover of the Soul—that His Name will be more excellent to you than gold or precious stones, than wealth, or honour, even than your own good name! *Then* you will be able to say indeed, "O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world." Thou that hast manifested Thy glory on earth, and yet hast set Thy glory above the heavens: Thou that art mindful of man: Thou that hast made him lower than the angels, but yet only so as to crown him with glory and worship, "O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world!"

SERMON X.

First Sunday after the Epiphany.

THE HEAVENLY FATHER'S BUSINESS.

S. LUKE II. 49.

“AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, HOW IS IT THAT YE SOUGHT ME? WIST YE NOT THAT I MUST BE ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS?”

ARE these the words of JESUS the Son of Mary? They seem at first sight a cold, stern, unsympathising answer to give to a Mother who had for three days lost her Son. Nay more, considering the circumstances under which this answer was given, it sounds at first not only cold and stern and unsympathising, but even a grave and unmerited rebuke, and a rebuke formally administered in the presence of others by a Son to His Mother. And yet that Son was JESUS CHRIST, and that Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. And He was the SON of God, and she was the Mother of God!

Can we venture for a moment to bring the picture before us? For remember, the Gospel history is no mere fiction, but a record of events, and a narrative of *facts* which really took place. The Gospel is a word-picture representing facts which concern the eternal interests not only of mankind in the aggregate, but of each individual man, of each one of us. And this holds true of the personages whose lives it portrays. They are not ideals which we create as a vision of the mind; they are not the fictitious characters of a story book; they are not imaginary beings whom we may mould and carve as we will; they are not figures which we may model or clothe according to our tastes or prejudices or predilections;—but they are realities, most real, so intensely real, that all else fades besides, and in comparison of them.

There can be no compromise, no scope for toning and paring down the grand old truths which they represent; no room for the admission of views ranging from the full acceptance of all truth down to a doubtful assent to a shifting minimum. If Christianity is Christianity at all, and not the veriest imposture, then JESUS CHRIST is Perfect God and Perfect Man, and all who are brought into relation with Him (and who is not?) must necessarily be affected thereby. I need not say how this applies in fullest force and chiefly to her whom He deigned to call His Mother, and of whose very substance He deigned as perfect Man to

be born, to her whom He chose out of all mankind (and that by her own free will and consent) whose own Son He chose to be and to continue to be. Practically I feel certain that there are many Christians who look upon the relation of our Blessed LORD to His Mother as if she were a mere ideal, or an automaton, or an instrument which was thrown aside when once the Nativity was past. Now this is simply not only absurd but profane.

With this light upon the picture let us look for a very few minutes attentively at it. I have ventured to put one side of it as strongly as I could in order to guard the other. For there is great caution required in the use of theological terms, to keep the balance of truth, or as the Apostle calls it, "the proportion of the faith."

The circumstances related in the Gospel of this day took place twelve years after the Great Day of the Epiphany. All that we know of our Blessed LORD's life from that time is, that His parents (that is, His Mother and His foster-father) were in the habit, as religious and devout Jews, of going up yearly—as a matter of obligation on the part of S. Joseph, and of devotion on the part of the Blessed Virgin—to the Festival of the Pass-over. We find further that on one of these occasions (the one to which the text refers), when our Blessed LORD was twelve years old, that "they went up" with Him, and after they had, as we read, "fulfilled the days," that is, observed the

whole Octave of the Feast, "they returned." Now after the first day of their journey homeward they found that the Child JESUS had "tarried behind" in Jerusalem, and Joseph and His Mother "knew not of it." We read that they "sought Him" amongst the band of pilgrims with whom they were journeying to no purpose, and that then they retraced their steps of this day's journey, thus making two days, and on the third day "found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."

Then it was that, amazed as they both were, His Mother, naturally enough, and with a full heart, a heart full of love and tenderness, and yet with a certain amount of tender reproach, said unto Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Observe, she does not say that they sought Him vexed, or irritated, but "sorrowing"—a word in itself (one would imagine) which would immediately bring some loving answer of assurance, if not of excuse, from Him of Whom we so soon after read, that "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was *subject* unto them." Not so! That time was not yet come. It was needful that the LORD of all should carefully guard His prerogatives as the God-Man, as the SON of GOD, as well as the Son of Mary, and He answers, "How is it that ye sought Me?" And

then He adds, in those wonderful words of the text, which are in themselves a perfect mine of theology, words which contain such deep, mysterious, solemn truths, "Wist ye not"—did ye not know, did ye not understand, "that I *must* be about My FATHER's business," or as He says, in S. John's Gospel, "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." The very ties of human affection *must* give place when the greater call comes. "I *must*," He says, "be about My FATHER's business." Like His great follower, S. Paul, "necessity is laid upon Him," not only to "preach the Gospel," like S. Paul, but also to manifest Himself as the MESSIAH, the CHRIST of GOD. "Wist ye not," He says, "that I must be about My FATHER's business?" As if He should say,—“I have manifested Myself to the poor Jewish shepherds; I have manifested Myself to the Gentile kings; I have manifested Myself as the Man of Suffering in the Circumcision: now I will manifest Myself as the Creator, the LORD and Governor of all things in the Miracle of Cana of Galilee: I will manifest Myself as the Divine Providence to My Apostles in stilling the stormy waves: and now I manifest Myself to these teachers of the law, to these doctors of the Sanhedrim, to those who are, and rightly, your acknowledged ecclesiastical guides, I must now manifest Myself as not only a Doctor, a Teacher, but as *the* Teacher sent from God; and further, I now manifest Myself

as the very Divine Wisdom. I must explain My own Scriptures. I must teach how that "the things concerning Me have an end;" I am He of Whom Moses and the Prophets speak; if ye will but learn, I am He Who will solve all your difficulties, and furnish the key to all your perplexities: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten SON to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "That GOD (He seems to say) is My FATHER; I am His SON; Wist ye not I *must* be about My FATHER's business?" For this very end I was born and I came into the world; I was indeed sent by God, but yet as God and Man I came of My own free will. I was sent to do His "business" and to finish His work. And that work is the salvation of souls, not of one here and there, not of many, not of a chosen number only (though *that* is true in one sense) but of *all* who will to be saved, of all who will not perish, but believing in Me, that is, in My Mission from the FATHER, may "have everlasting life." "Wist ye not that I *must* be about My FATHER's business?" I and My FATHER are one: His work is My work, His business Mine, His love for souls Mine. My Life is offered to carry out that "business," that stupendous work. To carry out His work I offer not My Death only, but My whole Life: My Nativity, Circumcision, Epiphany, Fasting, My long nights of Prayer on the cold, lone mountain side, My

days of weariness and trial amongst a faithless, dead, sensual, worldly, unsympathising people; My miracles and preaching; My Cross and Passion; My Agony in the garden; My desertion by My own Apostles; My Crucifixion; My lifting up on the Cross, that Death that I longed for, and yet in one sense shrank from, that Baptism of Blood of which I said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I *straitened* till it is accomplished?" All form part of the great scheme of Redemption. "Wist ye not that I must be about My FATHER's business?"

"And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them." But the Maiden Mother bowed her head in adoration. She is silent. She says not a word. But far better, "she kept all these sayings and pondered them in her heart."

In passing may I venture to suggest that this seems to be the right spirit in which to receive religious instruction and to hear sermons, namely, to accept much that we cannot understand, and that in silence. Well then, after this great sentence of the text, and this Manifestation of His Divine Wisdom amidst the Doctors, what does the dear Blessed LORD do? See how, burning though He was with zeal and enthusiasm, (if I may so say,) burning with an unquenchable thirst for souls, burning with a love for man commensurate only with the Love of God, (for it was the Love of the God-Man,) yet He left the temple! "He

went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." And for Eighteen long years He lived that hidden contemplative Life of which we have no record, (save that He was "subject unto them,") until the time came that He should go forth again into the active Ministerial Life—in *both* of which Lives, nevertheless, it would be blasphemy to believe that He was engaged in aught else save His "FATHER'S Business!"

It remains for me very briefly to sketch out two leading thoughts in this day's Gospel, of which I must ask you to fill in the outlines.

First, this,—That enthusiasm is necessary to religion. It is necessary to its birth; it is necessary to its sustentation; it is necessary to its progress, development, and ultimate object. I might have said zeal instead of enthusiasm, and so I would, but that one word about zeal would bring into our mind, and perhaps carry beyond its legitimate scope, its suggested corrective of discretion. And certainly religious indiscretion in the matter of zeal is one of the last things to be charged upon, at least most of us. No; we are much more given to apathy. We *want* enthusiasm; we want, we sorely need, as a rule, the Divine afflatus which makes us restless when we are not as a habit engaged in serving God, and about His Business. But if we have zeal, let us see to it that it is such a zeal as our LORD's when

He says, "The zeal of Thine House hath even consumed Me." And after all enthusiasm is only another word for zeal combined with earnestness. Let us never forget that without earnestness, without enthusiasm, without zeal, the world would never have been converted, or at least evangelized: without them, the Gospel would not have been preached, and the Apostles and the martyrs would not have died, and the Saints would not have lived! Prudence and discretion are great and glorious virtues in their right places. Very often, however, we know that they are only other names for sloth and cowardice. Without enthusiasm we are always, and for ever holding back. We are always considering how far we should damage our health, (say in early rising,) or our prospects in life, or even those of our relations. Without enthusiasm we are certain to become indifferent to the truths of religion, and probably wholly irreligious. For instance, no unenthusiastic person would dream of modelling his life on that of our Blessed LORD. And that is the first and last axiom of Christianity. We have all more or less to learn what is meant by that. "*I must be;*" *I must continually be;* *I must* always be engaged, in season and out of season, in the Heavenly "FATHER's business." Remember that this is the ordinary Christian's Rule of Life. It cannot be relegated to the Clergy. That would be an argument which would prove a great deal too

much. Each man, layman or Priest, is accountable for his own soul. Each man is his brother's keeper; which, in other words, is only saying that each man *must* be about his heavenly FATHER'S Business, working out his own salvation and that of those with whom he is brought in contact, or better still, of those whom he can search out and seek.

II. The next and last point is this. We cannot be neutral. We *must* be either about our "FATHER'S business," or the Devil's. The conclusion is inevitable. We *must* be on God's side; we *must* be on God's side on all matters of faith and religion. We *must* be on God's side on all that relates to holiness of life, in all matters of self-denial. We cannot, I repeat, escape the alternative of the proposition,—it must be God or Mammon, Holiness or Sin. I mean we can make no terms with sin or Satan; we can make no truce with the Enemy of souls as exhibited in any one known sinful habit of life. We *must* work for God, one, one way; another, another. It often leads us to awkward conclusions. It often creates misunderstandings in our social circle, or, worse still, (possibly,) in our households. It often, nay, nearly always, endangers our temporal prosperity. But there it stands; we cannot turn aside from it—we cannot close our eyes to it. Through good report or ill report, through unpopularity, or, worse still, popularity, we "*must* be about" our

“FATHER’S business,” and that without moderation. We may indeed avoid or should avoid ostentation, and, as far as is possible, publicity or prominence. The more silent our work is, probably, the more sure it will be. But it *must* have enthusiasm about it, for otherwise it cannot have heart; and without heart and soul, mind and body, intellect and affection, memory and will, given up to God, and engaged in the loving FATHER’S business, it can be no real and acceptable work for God. But if it have all these—if we are daily striving to attain all these—then, then indeed it shall be with us according to His most true promise, that our Heavenly “FATHER which seeth in secret” shall reward “us openly.” O, that Reward is worth a million times more than all earthly rewards, great or small, for that reward is the “glory which shall be revealed in us,” with which, S. Paul says, “the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared.” “Work your work betimes,” says the Wise Man, “and in His time He will give you your Reward!”

SERMON XI.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

ROM. XII. 15.

“REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH
THEM THAT WEEP.”

THE power of Sympathy in its fulness is one of the greatest gifts God has given to man. It is the most attractive, the most unselfish, the most comprehensive, perhaps, of all the graces of God's giving. It includes within itself such great virtues as these, compassion, love, mercy, and tender-heartedness. It has perhaps more power of winning than any other grace. It lies indeed deep at the root of the heart of that man whom God has blessed with it, but its very tendency is to overflow, hence its outcome is perpetual, and therefore it nearly always shows itself on the surface of a character; the calls made upon it are unceasing, and yet it is never exhausted. It counts

time and trouble as nothing. It is always on the look-out as it were for what we may call its natural food,—some poor heart, worn, and wearied, and bruised by the burden of some old secret trouble or crushed by some great and unforeseen sorrow. It seeks out and attracts to itself some perplexed soul tossed about and driven to and fro on the sea of doubt or bewilderment—some poor wandering soul, so sadly like the dove sent out of the Ark by Noah, seeking for a place of rest and finding none.

There is nothing too great or too little for the power of Sympathy. It seems, as if by an instinct, to seek for and enter at once into the little tiny trials of every-day life, aye, even those of a child. It brings all the force it may be of genius and intellect to bear upon even *its* little difficulties in order to soothe them! Or again, on the other hand, it breaks down opposition, not always, as it were, taking it by storm, but it undermines and saps the very foundations of it. Nothing can, at least in the long run, withstand it. It enters unobtrusively by some narrow, almost imperceptible channel, just as a ray from the sun pierces a crevice in the clouds until they are gradually dispersed, and light and warmth are everywhere diffused!

Or once more, watch Sympathy as it seizes on some one little point, possibly an eccentricity in a character, and works at it until it has found another

upon which to exercise its functions, and see how it assimilates itself and blends its own characteristics with it, and transmutes its dross into gold. Yes, the man who has this marvellous power of Sympathy so entirely loses sight of himself, at least for a time, if not wholly, that *any* trouble or *all* the troubles, great or small, any wearying harass of mind, or any little fretfulness, wherever he may meet with them, in whatever frame of mind he himself may be, it makes no matter, he endeavours at once to make them his own—he bears his neighbour's burden, he loses to a certain extent his own individuality, he feels for, and with this object of his Sympathy, as he would, nay more than he would, feel for himself. And so the man goes on gaining step by step until he has made way enough to be trusted, and loved, and then he brings back lost trust and restored love!

And this, mark you, he does in spite of sneers, and ridicule, and rebuffs, and imputation of unworthy motives, and even of disappointment, and imposition from the very object of his Sympathy. Over and over again perhaps he is repulsed, or ridiculed, or despised, or imposed upon, and yet he perseveres. It is not with him, "Is this or that man right or wrong in this or that action, or in his whole life?" It is not "Did this or that man bring such a great or small trouble upon himself? and so it serves him right; he has

no one but himself to blame." It is not, "I have done all I can for him, and now I give him up, I will waste no more words upon him and give him no further help." It is not, "this or that man or woman has fallen too low ever to be raised again." There is no such thing with him "as an *incorrigible* woman of bad character," or an "*irreclaimable* drunkard," or an "*inveterate* thief," or a "*hopeless* liar," or a "*confirmed* hypocrite." These seem as not to be dreaded by him; he does not shrink from "*contamination*," by even, if need be, associating with such as these. He always indeed *fears* lest any one of these cases should seem to *deserve* the epithet attached to it; but he is too strong in his charity and his Sympathy—his heart is too full of love not to make one more effort, and even when that has failed, yet one more, to win, by this holy, all-embracing power of Sympathy which is endless.

But further, the man whom God has blessed with this great gift of Sympathy is sure to be a man, not only diffident of self, but also *grateful* to God. For this holy power has two more great graces attached to it, namely, those of humility and thankfulness. In dealing with those who have fallen into sin, even into great and grievous sins, in comforting those who have met with great and overwhelming sorrows, always there comes from the heart of the man whom God has blessed with Sympathy some such utterances as these,—“That

man I know is leading an openly sinful life ; that woman has fallen to the very depth of degradation : let me think, not so much what have been *their* sins, but what good can I do them ? how can I win them ? how can I show them that I would *do* anything, or *be* anything, even *all* things to all men, to gain them ? let me watch and watch on for the faintest chance, the slightest opportunity, or far better, encouragement, by which I may prove that I do not, out of any fancied superiority of my own, hold aloof from them. Let me think rather what have been their temptations, from the force of their position, or by their natural temperament, or from want of opportunities of advice or instruction, or from thoughtlessness, which may have led them on to such a point as to cause them to think that their steps can never be retraced. Let me place myself in their position, and meet them more than half way, and enter into their difficulties, aye, and above all, conceal my loathing of their sin, in order to win back the sinner by *Sympathy* and lovingkindness."

And then again comes another voice of the heart, not like that of the Pharisee of old, thanking God that he was not as other men are, but rather saying thus, "LORD JESUS, but for Thy grace I should have been suffered to fall into such-like sins ; not my merits but Thy undeserved love for me alone has preserved me !

Teach me to love this my brother even as Thou hast loved me, and so that I may win him back to Thee."

But even in the midst of this thanksgiving, humility will hold him back from boasting or censoriousness. And again, there would come another voice, "Art thou, after all, *much, if at all*, better than he?" Nay, art thou better than the sainted Pharisee S. Paul, who proclaimed himself the "chief" of sinners; are all *thy* actions pure? hast *thou* no *secret* sins? Thou hast had great opportunities of advancing in holiness; God has given thee perchance religious parents, ■ happy home, clear perception of right and wrong, a sensitive conscience. Alas! how little use *thou* hast made of them, (whereas, perhaps, thy poor erring brother or sister had none of them,) except for the grace of God thou wouldest have been in worse plight than he. Wilt *thou* not then go forward and say, "My brother, I too have sinned; let us both return together to the Good and True Shepherd Who is ever seeking both me and thee; let us *both* go, for we both need it, to be healed by the Good Physician, the Medicine of Whose Precious Blood shall heal us and restore us to health and strength."

But let us take another view of the subject. Besides Sympathy in Sorrow, and to win back the sinner, there should be also Sympathy in Joy.

Indeed, it stands first in the text, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice," comes before "weep with them that weep."

And this is not always an easy matter. It appears at first sight a natural and a Christian-like thing to rejoice in the prosperity of another, but practically it is not so. To envy prosperity, or another's happiness, or to repine at our own troubles, is much more common. But more common still perhaps is a sort of cold, passive, indifference, or Apathy, which is the exact opposite of Sympathy. To a certain extent it may be a kind of besetting sin of our national character. No one who has travelled much abroad, and seen our fellow countrymen in foreign countries can have failed to perceive, or it may be to feel this, I mean a cold, calm, apathetic, stolid, sense of superiority, an utter indifference to persons or things which do not affect our own comforts, directly or indirectly. Be this as it may, at least in individuals it resolves itself into a feeling of Selfishness, and a want of Sympathy. It might take its form in words somewhat thus, "Why should I rejoice in what does me no good? Why should I rejoice in another's prosperity, or any happiness which may have befallen him, if I myself gain nothing by it?" This is a wretchedly low view of Christianity, and the theory which assumes that all men are brothers contradicts it—theory do I say—if we believe the Bible, if we call ourselves Christians, if we *realise*

for one moment our connection with each other in one common body or Society, the Church, and in one common head, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, we *could* not think or feel, much less speak thus. For "we, being many," says S. Paul in this same chapter, "are one body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another." And again to the Corinthians, he says, "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." And once more in the previous part of this same chapter, "By one Spirit are we *all* baptized into one body," and so according to our Church Catechism, by Baptism we are *all* made "members of CHRIST, children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Surely then, my brethren, we should try to exercise this blessed grace of Sympathy, we should try to sympathise with each other in our joys, and in our sorrows, in prosperity or in adversity, in happiness or trouble, and in the words of the text we should "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

But above all, (and I reserve this for the last and greatest reason,) by Sympathy with each other both in joy and in sorrow, we are permitted, more closely than in any other way to follow in the footsteps of our dear LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Yes, indeed, that word Sympathy is not only ■

common every-day household word, but it contains in it the highest, and deepest teaching of Theology. For after all what was it but Sympathy for fallen man that brought our LORD from Heaven! It was this that made Him take our human nature, with all its infirmities (except one) upon Him. It was this that made Him suffer as an Infant in His Circumcision. It was Sympathy with poverty which caused Him to be born of poor parents. Sympathy with obedience that caused Him to be subject, He the Creator, to His own creatures. In all, it is He the Head, sympathising and suffering, with and for, and in the members, with, and for, and in, all of us, whatever our age or sex, or rank or station. Yes, He sympathises with us in our Infancy, in our Boyhood, in our Youth, in our Manhood.

Yes! and again, it was Sympathy even with our recreations and festivities, that caused Him as at this time (as we read in the Gospel for this day,) to turn the water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. It was Sympathy with the life of Virginity that caused Him to be born of a pure Virgin, and to lead a Virgin life as man; and yet too, it was Sympathy with the Married state which brought Him when He was "called" to honour with His presence, and by His *first* miracle, the marriage feast. It was the very *refinement of sympathy* which caused Him to anticipate any direct request on the part of His

Blessed Mother, when the wine "was failing," and this His first great miracle was wrought, and the good wine poured forth (we may well believe) to shield His hospitable entertainers from shame, as well as out of regard for the natural wants of the guests. It was Sympathy that made Him weep at the grave of Lazarus, and this it was too in Him, the Sinless One, that welcomed the sinner Saint Mary Magdalene. To sympathise with us "He was," as we read in the first lesson this evening, "despised and rejected, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and esteemed as nought, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, oppressed, persecuted, scourged, buffeted, mocked, spit upon, crucified," and all out of love, and Sympathy for us. To sympathise with us, "and out of sympathy too," He bore our sins, (sinless Himself) and was numbered with the transgressors, and above all, and by virtue of His Sympathy, it was, and it *is*, He who made, and is making even now, and ever liveth to make Intercession for us, the transgressors !

We cannot then, I think, dearest brethren, well over-rate this great Christian virtue of Sympathy. We see how at almost every turn of our life we may meet with opportunities for its exercise. In festivities (so always that there is Christian moderation,) and even in the very play of children ; in great heartbreaking trials, or in petty

vexations, in joy, or in sorrow, in doubt, or in difficulty.

We have but one thing to remember, let our constant aim be, lovingly to enter into, and place ourselves in each other's positions. In other words let us do as we would be done by. It is not always an easy matter. Nay, at times, and with some at all times, and especially with those who are naturally of what is called a reserved, and undemonstrative character, it is very hard. But still we gain much by trying, and we gain more by succeeding. One thing is certain, we cannot possibly lose anything whether we succeed or fail. No ! we cannot fail if we only persevere long enough. Remember, that to feel, and to show Sympathy, may be, and often is, the first and last step, the beginning, and middle, and end, of winning a soul for Heaven. To win a soul for God ! Only think what that means ! Or even to help one soul one step upward, and forward. Blessed, loving JESUS, for giving us even a chance of so doing, and to win so much happiness for ourselves here ! To love CHRIST is happiness, and so it is to love CHRIST's, and all who belong to CHRIST, and that includes in one sense *every one* down to the least of His brethren. True Sympathy can only arise out of a love of CHRIST. Mere consideration for others or some kind of compassion or pity, or good nature is well enough as far as it goes : but true Christian Sympathy is commensurate only with

the Love of CHRIST, universal, unselfish, and equally ready, at any sacrifice, for little wants, or great emergencies.

To "rejoice with them that do rejoice, to weep with them that weep ;" " O," says S. Bernard on this text, "in how little a sermon has he, (S. Paul,) described the mark of ALL RELIGION !"

SERMON XII.

Septuagesima Sunday.

MANY CALLED, FEW CHOSEN.

S. MATTH. XX. 16, AND XXII. 14.

“FOR MANY BE CALLED, BUT FEW CHOSEN.”

THESE words occur, or perhaps it would be safer for me to say, most probably occur, at the end of two of our Blessed LORD's Parables. At the end of the Parable, which we read for this day's Gospel, and also at the end of the Parable, which is the Gospel for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. The scope of the Gospel for this day (Septuagesima Sunday) is, perhaps, somewhat to this effect. We are chiefly to learn from it the lesson that GOD may do what He pleases with His own: that His actions are beyond the reach of man's judgments or man's criticism, that they are not to be measured by the line of human reason. Now these are axioms which every one, at first sight and in theory, is ready to admit, but which, to all intents and purposes, practically and

virtually, a very, very great number, if not all of us, more or less, have a tendency to deny.

Well, then, we have in this very Parable an instance, I say, of this tendency. Almighty God, you will observe here, is presented to us under the figure of a Householder, Who goes forth at different hours of the day to hire labourers into His vineyard. He hires them at all hours, early and late. He hires them from the first to the eleventh hour. And then when the evening comes He pays them the wages He had agreed upon. Now, strangely enough, He begins His payment, *not* with the first, not with those who had worked longest, hardest, and under the greatest difficulties,—He begins, I say, *not* with the first, but with the last, that is, with those who came in at the eleventh hour. And, more strangely still, He gives these last—those who came so late, and worked so short a time—He gives them the *same wages* as those who had borne the burden and heat of the day.

We can conceive the scene which the Parable brings before us. We can imagine how those who had worked long and hard looked on as the eleventh-hour workers were paid. How generous perhaps they would feel their master to be in paying these late comers so liberally; and how of course they would conclude, from the fact of this liberal payment, that when *their* turn came their payment would be so much greater. They *knew*,

it is true, what agreement the Householder had made with all of them. But they forgot or ignored this for the moment : and we can imagine how they murmured, and felt that an injustice had been done them, when they all and equally received the same wages, though, as they would call it, for very different amounts of work.

Now we ourselves perhaps feel that we should have done and said much the same things, for if we look into our hearts we find practically how often we really *do* much the same thing, which, nevertheless, is neither more nor less than to call in question God's justice. But yet when we have not this *fact* before our minds we, at the same time, and almost in the same breath, are quite ready to admit that God has a perfect right to do what He wills, and as He pleases with His own. Only when this theory is worked out into practice, and *we* are affected by it, then we forget all about God's justice in a sense of our own wrongs as we think them.

After all, what *did* it matter to the other labourers that those of the eleventh hour received the same wages as they? They *lost* nothing by it—nothing was deducted from *their* wages. In plain words then, they were not only calling in question the justice and the wisdom of the Householder, that is, of God, but they really and indeed murmured only through feelings of jealousy or of envy or of ill-will.

We must apply the same principle to our text as it is illustrated by this Parable. "Many are called, few are chosen." God calls whom He wills. It is not for us to call in question His justice or His wisdom. God is infinite—we are finite. His thoughts, His ways, His works are not as ours—we cannot bring them within the scope of our reason. We must simply accept *all* that God sees fit to do, in remembering that He is God and we are men. This is the only possible way of accounting for thousands of, what we think, anomalies, and perplexities, and difficulties. Just in the same way again God sees fit to allow many to surpass us in holiness of life, who were converted long after we were. He confers equal or greater blessings upon them, and they far outstrip us. They have the same Sacraments, the same means of grace, and have them long after us, but profit much more than we do, and so surpass us. So, again, He chooses to call many, He chooses to choose few. All that we have to do in the matter is to make our own "calling and election sure:" all that we have to make sure of is that *we* do not fail through negligence or sloth to get our wages, which are rather rewards than wages, the blessing of Eternal Life, through the grace of God.

II. These words of our text, "many are called, but few are chosen," occur again (and here I may say they undoubtedly occur) at the end of another

of our LORD'S Parables to be found in S. Matth. xxii. 14. It is the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, which commonly goes under the name of the Parable of the Wedding Garment. Here the case stands somewhat thus. Almighty God, under the figure of a certain King, makes a marriage feast for His SON. It is the Marriage Supper of His SON, take it as we may of the Blessed Sacrament or of the Church of CHRIST. Now those first invited refuse to come—they make excuses, both frivolous and false. The invitation is extended to others. And now not only are these invited, and not only do many come, but out of those who came, one does not comply with the conditions of his invitation, or rather does not comply with the conditions under which alone he is permitted to be present. This wedding garment was not one with which he had to provide himself, but one with which the King provided him. He either neglected to put it on, or he despised it, and therefore it was that the king casts him out of His presence into outer darkness. He thought to pass muster unnoticed, but the unerring eye of the King detects him—He singles him out, He questions him. The man is speechless; his conscience accuses and convicts him. He would fain have participated, as it were, in the privileges of Christianity, without being a Christian; he would fain, as it were, have been a Communicant without repentance, including, remem-

ber, as that word does, a cleansed heart, that is, first, a heart having a deep sense of sin, a heart feeling its need of forgiveness, a heart cleansed by pardon of sin, and a heart full of resolution of amendment of life. But this man thought to pass muster in the crowd. The difference between him and others is not detected by his fellow-guests, and so he thinks no one sees or knows it. Just so, it may be, we are tempted to feel that so long as our lives are on an average, and so far as outside appearance goes, not much worse or not much better than those of our neighbours, we shall pass muster too, that because they do not notice anything wrong in us, therefore God does not. We flatter ourselves that we are called. But see how little that avails when the King comes to visit the guests, when that warning sentence, which has often, or at least sometimes startled us, rings in our ears,—“Many are called, but few are chosen.” Alas, poor man! he was called, but not chosen.

Let me in conclusion draw one or two brief practical thoughts, as the results from the repetition of this passage at the end of each of these Parables.

It appears to me that the first lesson we learn is this, namely, that we must *look at home*, and work out our own salvation without speculating about abstruse and difficult questions. Still less need we speculate or busy ourselves about the

affairs of others in judging them. And, next, we must give *diligence* to make our calling and election sure. We must be careful not to build, and not trade too much upon our gifts, our graces, and our privileges. We must try to keep a fair and due balance between God's share and our own share in our salvation. We must not leave it all to God, much less must we think we can do it all for ourselves. Having been baptized will not necessarily save us; having been confirmed, or going to Confession, or receiving the Holy Communion will not necessarily save us. They are all means and helps, even *necessary* helps to salvation, but they will not of themselves, or by the mere reception of them, save us. On the other hand, a harmless, blameless, respectable, or even a hard-working, charitable life, will not save us. We may be in the world's sense excellent citizens, good husbands, good wives, good children. We may be industrious, and painstaking, and immensely charitable, and even self-denying. But still we may not have on that account that "wedding garment," which includes everything—without which we have no right to be a guest at the Marriage Feast.

Nothing will save us but the grace of God, that grace flowing into our souls by a due reception of His means of grace, and also shown forth in the holiness of our lives. But even beyond this we want something else. In one sense His grace is

indeed sufficient for us, but unless we not only co-operate with it, but *persevere* in it, we may not, and indeed we shall not, and cannot be saved. We may have been "called" but not "chosen," or we may have been chosen in one sense, but not in its fullest and most necessary sense, of enduring to the end and so being saved.

O those words (if I remember rightly) of the great S. Jerome! "Many are called," he says, "but few are chosen: to begin well is the lot of many, but to persevere of few." Yes, indeed, we have entered the lists. We have started in the race. We have been "called." Our Baptism, our Confirmation, our Confessions, our Communion, our very presence here this night, are all pledges on God's part of His grace and of our calling. But let them be also pledges on *our* part of our willingness and of our earnest desire to fight on His side, and to run so as to win in the Christian race.

We must not get weary in well doing. We must not get faint-hearted. We must keep on steadily in one course; we must be going forward at a steady even pace; we must wage our warfare with circumspection, with discretion, with courage, with a set fixed purpose of being both winners in the race and conquerors in the fight. We must never be diverted nor turned aside by objects which lie alongside of us; nor must we be taken off our guard by the feints and counterfeits of our

adversary. Called as we certainly have been, made heirs of salvation as we certainly have been, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven as we certainly are, let us not run any risk, however slight, of being rejected or disinherited, but let us, as S. Paul says, or rather as the HOLY SPIRIT says by him, "Let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in God in CHRIST JESUS." That prize is the fadeless Crown, incorruptible, undefiled, reserved for us for ever in Heaven!

SERMON XIII.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

ALMSGIVING.

S. MARK XII. 41.

“AND JESUS SAT OVER AGAINST THE TREASURY.”

By a few weeks I am anticipating the time of which the text speaks. This is Quinquagesima, or about fifty days before Easter; the event following the text occurred on Tuesday in Holy Week, or five days before Easter. But also this is the last Sunday before we enter upon the Season of Lent, and I am anxious to bring before you one of the three great Lenten duties, or rather a duty which we may so learn in Lent as to become a habit and a system to us in after life, a duty *unlike* fasting which is only to be undertaken at certain periods, and even then cannot be undertaken by all, but like prayer and worship, that is within everybody's reach, constantly recurring, requiring only a willing heart, a heart that is filled with that most excellent gift of which the

Collect and Epistle of this day are so full, that gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, love for God, and love for man.

It is at the close then of Tuesday in Holy Week that we are to think of our LORD. All the day long from the early morning He had been teaching in the Temple, now encouraging His Disciples, now avoiding the insidious questions of His enemies, at one time reasoning and disputing with them, at another putting forth the power of His wisdom to reduce them to silence; and then again either indirectly by parables, or by plain, open rebukes, denouncing the obstinacy and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes. And so, as the day drew to its close, sad at heart and wearied, "JESUS sat over against the Treasury!"

The public teaching of this day was over, and it is evident that the Disciples left our LORD there seated, and wandered away to some other part of the Temple. And here to make the beautifully minute points of the narrative clear to you, I would have you bear in mind and compare the parallel passage to this twelfth chapter of S. Mark, namely, the twenty-first chapter of S. Luke. It is there written, "And He," that is JESUS, "looked up," that is "looked up," it may be, from having His eyes fixed upon the ground in holy meditation; or it may be "He looked" attentively at what is shortly afterwards related, or

more probably still, "He looked up" after His Disciples, in order to recall them, and to draw their attention to what He was about to tell them. For we find that it immediately follows, "And He called unto Him His Disciples." Now, what was passing? Our LORD was seated in the most crowded and public part of the Temple,—"**JESUS** sat over against the Treasury." There would naturally be at this time an unusual number of people in Jerusalem as the Passover was so near at hand. They were all flocking especially to this part of the Temple, that, as it is written in the law of the LORD, none should "appear empty before the LORD." **JESUS** then "beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much." He saw not only what they gave, but *how* they gave, whether heartily, cheerfully, reverently, lovingly, and abundantly out of their abundance, or on the other hand whether they gave ostentatiously, or grudgingly, sparingly though they were rich: often, it may be, giving much in sum, but little in proportion to what they possessed, giving that of which they would not feel the loss.

Now here comes the point of the whole history. And then "there came;" "He *saw* also," (S. Luke says,) He *singled out* in that great crowd "a certain poor widow;" one woman, and she poor, and not only poor, but with no one to look to for support. He saw her "casting in," or as

the Latin Vulgate has it, "*putting in*," as in contradistinction to the "throwing in" of the rich, she cast in, diffidently and modestly, yet heartily and lovingly, and with full faith and trust: He saw her almost stealthily "*putting in*" her two mites, that little tiny sum, yet a sum which was absolutely the whole of her means of subsistence; a little sum which was just about enough, as it has been reckoned, to be the support in that country of a poor person for one day. Well the day had come to a close, possibly she had had "sufficient for the day," she did not distress herself about the morrow. Her prayer may have been, (for it was a Jewish as well as a Christian petition,) "Give us day by day our daily bread," and so, as the world would call it, rashly and improvidently, "she of her want, did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Now notice next, the *place* where she made her noble offering,—she cast her two mites into the Treasury, "unto the offerings of God." She of her penury "cast in" there, as well as the rich men of their abundance. And here too we may observe, for it is an important point, the special purpose to which these "offerings" were devoted. "This treasury," (says a learned and devout writer,) "was the place in which the gifts of the people were cast, and in which they were kept for the following purposes,—for the Ornamentation and Repairs of the Temple, for the Sup-

port of the Priests and Levites, for their Vestments, and for the Relief of the Poor." The *primary* virtue of this poor widow in giving, has been much misunderstood. It was not only right of her to give, but her gift was specially sanctified, considering the *object* to which she gave. "It was not so much," (says another great writer,) "an act of *mercy* on the part of this poor woman, and so of the rich men, as an act of Religion, as an act of Worship; and although the offerings made were many and great, yet we cannot call this act of the poor widow an act of extravagance, but being an act of Worship therefore an act of recognition of the majesty of God, as well as an act of implicit trust, faith, hope and love for Him." It was not mere Almsgiving, but Religious Almsgiving.

At least hers was an act most highly commended by our Blessed LORD, and one for which He called His Disciples round Him in order to draw their attention to it.

And now, my brethren, I know full well that merely to prove that a thing is right, or even to show that our LORD has given His blessing to it, is not sufficient to the majority of people, or even to the majority of most congregations. Faith is not a matter of proof or an exercise of reason or of intellect, but as it is written, it is the "gift of God." It is God, and God alone Who must put it into our hearts both to *will* and to *do*.

Still you cannot fail to notice how remarkably

the Christian Church, taking as she does her name from CHRIST, follows, by her rules directly in the course which our Blessed LORD Himself had praised.

Our Offertory System is the "Treasury" over against which JESUS sits even now! Its objects are precisely the same,—the Maintenance and Decoration of the fabric of the Church, the support of the Clergy, and the relief of the Poor. All other means are in some sense, and more or less, illegitimate. Well-intentioned they may be, and are, but without authority, unblest, and therefore in no way *directly* connected with religion. In this unbelieving age, or rather I would say in the *past* unbelieving age, a host of spurious substitutes have been attempted, to take the place of what God has appointed, and Holy Scripture expressly enjoins. By "past times," I mean the dark days of the last century, and even I am afraid, not unfrequently, now, with marvellous ingenuity worthy of a better adaptation, all kinds of means have been invented to meet what undoubtedly has been and is, a great necessity. The Poor must be cared for, the Clergy must live. But on this latter point there appear to be differences of opinion, and I do not wish to be dogmatic. The Church, the House of God, must be made and kept fit for His worship in the beauty of His holiness. At least the fabric and ornaments must be decent and fitting. And because the past generation or two so

suffered people to shirk their responsibilities in Religious Almsgiving, the Christian Treasury, from the gifts of the rich to the mites of the widow, has been more or less neglected and overlooked. People were actually growing up into a weak and wicked belief, but one at the same time so ludicrous as scarcely to be worth mentioning, that either God required nothing at their hands, or that they need not give at all to God, or that there was no such thing as Religious Almsgiving as an act of Praise and Thanksgiving, or that Almsgiving meant *only* giving to the poor, or that they might give to the Offertory as they would to a troublesome beggar, (which is as close to blasphemy as they could well get.) I thank God that I fully believe that all this proceeded from sheer ignorance for the most part. Never otherwise could I imagine that there lived a man so hopelessly ungrateful as deliberately to insult God by refusing Him what after all came from Him. Or once again, we have good reason to know how many people are apt to evade all responsibility themselves, and to leave to the Clergy to provide, for themselves, for the wants of the Poor, and for the maintenance of the requisites of Divine Service out of next to nothing, or at least out of a very scantily filled treasury. As to how this was done none seemed to care to inquire so that, first, it *was* done, and, secondly, that *they* had nothing to do with it !

I believe with all my heart that the whole system of Charity Sermons, and Charity Dinners, and Charity Bazaars, and Pew-rents, and such like devices are only spurious attempts to bolster up what has been a very weak point in our religious needs, that is the want of due appreciation of responsibility, and the practice of hearty, loving, generous, *systematic* Almsgiving at the Offertory, those alms being presented on the Altar, the Mercy Seat, the "Treasury over against" which "JESUS" sits.

Remember, my brethren, I have no one single person, or any single church or chapel in my mind; and wherever these customs obtain, they are simply, I can quite believe, retained only until the better and truer mode can be adopted; and I am quite sure that as we get to love the Church of CHRIST more, and understand our Bibles better, for these two must always go together, so, in proportion, will these, (to say the least,) dangerous ways of supplementing, or rather supplanting the Christian way, decrease.

But also we may much marvel that these systems of getting together money should obtain amongst persons who are great in quoting texts of Scripture, but who are not necessarily "mighty in the Scriptures." We have yet to learn that it is Charity at a Charity dinner, to pay a large sum for a meal with every possible luxury, and then when the meal is over, to have the persons there assembled

announcing that they will give, or have given, so much for such and such a good object; and then, to conclude the performance, that applause should follow, proportionate to the sum mentioned,—we have still to learn, I say, that this is a *Scriptural* charity.

And I am afraid we can find as little authority for Bazaars, which might sometimes, if not always be called by very hard names on the score of honesty, or on that of worldliness; once more also I venture to express a doubt whether ■ Quarterly Appeal from any given pulpit for such and such a charity, does not tend to the great evil of Preacher-hunting, as it certainly does to that of a sort of spasmodic intermittent money-payment, produced by temporary excitement, but which does not betoken a healthy condition of the mind, not to say of the soul.

About the hiring and letting of different compartments in a Church we may feel quite clear. We may be sure that there must have existed some dire necessity which first prompted, and then continued this course. Christian people must have sadly lost sight of their duties of religious Almsgiving at the Offertory, before it was necessary to resort to this, I fear I must call it, iniquitous system. And then again, it seems so clearly condemned by S. James. It might have come in after the Reformation. And we know that Luther was ■ Reformer and objected to the

Epistle of S. James, that "epistle of straw," as he profanely calls it, nevertheless an Epistle, in which such distinctions in Church are very strongly reprehended.

I conclude as I commenced. I tell you, Lent is at hand. It is a time for practising self-denial in some form or another. Not that self-denial should end with Lent, but that it should then be practised so as to grow into a *habit* of after life. The Church recommends us, and we give you the opportunity of increased *Prayer*. The Church suggests to you the duty of *Fasting*. The one that you may increase in the habit of prayer, the other that you may, even when Lent is over, have habitual self-restraint over the appetites of mind and body.

But to mean anything to be real, to be in earnest, whether by prayer or fasting, we must join almsgiving with both of them, and not only so, but we must do it with an intention of making our offerings regular and systematic, as well as generous. A man may make long prayers out of ostentation, or use frequent prayers to the neglect of his home-duties. A man may abstain from eating or drinking out of mere distaste, or even (and the case is not uncommon) out of miserly economy. But though dangers of course may beset the duty even of Almsgiving, as they beset all holy acts of worship, yet it is in some respects as true an act of worship and an act of self-denial as the other two.

A man who without ostentation gives his alms is indeed blessed, and loved, of God. I say without ostentation, and you will observe that the system of collecting alms in bags does more or less do away with ostentation, by making almsgiving more or less of a secret act; it is possible indeed that some may even take advantage of this safeguard against ostentation, to give, what they forget that He Who sits over against the Treasury can see; but still, I cannot but believe, that one who thus without ostentation does regularly, cheerfully, as God prospers him, at some sacrifice to himself, though it be not perhaps to the extent of all his living, give to the offerings of God, shall not be without his rich reward, that is the reward of the love of God, for “God loveth a cheerful giver.”

May I venture to ask you to read over at home the Offertory Sentences in the Communion Service, and see how plainly both the duty, the necessity, and the reward of Almsgiving are most clearly put before you? and notice how in the selection of these Sentences, they seem especially to point out the *objects* of almsgiving,—the same with those of the “Treasury,” namely, the maintenance of the Clergy, the care of the Church, and the relief of the Poor.

At each opportunity then, that you have of making your offering to God, let this one thought fix itself into your heart,—that be it much, or be it little you may have to give, when your hand is

put forth, or alas! it may be held back, that at that moment the eye of JESUS is upon you, that He is looking at each heart to see how it responds to every act of love He has shown, every bitter agony He has endured for it. He sees how, and whether each gift is proportioned to the means of the giver; whether you do really offer of your best to Him, not keeping the gold and silver for yourselves, and the baser metal for Him; but that you are merciful "after your power," that if you have much you "give plenteously," if you have little, you give gladly of that little; and you may know and be sure, for He Himself has said it, that He loves a "cheerful giver." He looks at you with joy as He sits "over against the Treasury," opening His treasures of love and mercy to you — you open your treasures, and give your alms to Him and to His!

SERMON XIV.

Friday before Lent.

PREPARATION TO DO GOD'S WILL.

S. LUKE XII. 47.

“AND THAT SERVANT, WHICH KNEW HIS LORD'S WILL, AND PREPARED NOT HIMSELF, NEITHER DID ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, SHALL BE BEATEN WITH MANY STRIPES.”

WE have all of us, I suppose, made up our minds, and many of us some time ago, about our Lenten duties. The difficulty is how to put them into practice. Not to know our duties is bad, but to know them, and not to do them is worse. It is our Blessed LORD Himself who says, that “that servant which knew his LORD's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” But the question may arise in the minds of some of us,—very few I would fain hope—How *am* I to know my LORD's will? I know perfectly well that if any great trouble or misfortune comes upon me,

I ~~am~~ to say, "God's will, my LORD's will be done." I am to submit to it uncomplainingly, and cheerfully, and in no wise to rebel against it. I am to say, "God knows best, my LORD knows best. This is not what I should have chosen for myself, but still it must be best, for it is God's will, it is my LORD's will."

But after all, this is much like being a mere machine, if we stop there. In fact it is a mere passive, slothful acquiescence in what we cannot help. From a religious point of view it might be, and in some respects indeed it is part of, and the chief part of the religion of a Mahometan. It is pure fatalism. "Such and such a thing is decreed. It happens. And I accept it." This is quite good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It is not, if it only stops there, what we call Christianity. Of course there is a worse stage still, when as in the parable at the end of which our text comes, there is knowledge of the LORD's will, and not even passive acquiescence in, but active rebellion against it. That state of mind is, of course, far worse still.

Hence it follows that the only thing which remains for us is active co-operation with the LORD's will, not only in receiving it, but in *doing* it.

But there is a preliminary step, there is a step which comes even before that, a step before accepting the LORD's will, or even knowing the LORD's will, and that is, the *preparing* to do the LORD's will.

Observe that it is not only "that servant which knew his LORD's will," and did it not, but that servant which knew the LORD's will, and "*prepared* not himself:" it is he which would be "beaten with many stripes." The very reason probably why he did not "*do* his LORD's will" is because "he prepared not himself." It took him unawares. And so, even in passive acquiescence like active co-operation, it may be questioned whether the servant who prepares not himself can passively or rather submissively receive the will of the LORD, much less do it.

Think for a moment. Will you tell me that living *without preparation* will enable us to meet any great heavy trouble when it comes, as come it must some day, and in some shape or another? Will you tell me that you are ready any day to submit to the will of God in taking you from, or what is perhaps harder, taking from you that person, or that thing, which you prize as, or more dearly than life itself? You cannot—you will not—receive God's will, as God's will, without *constantly* doing, and preparing to do the will of God, and that in all things. We are not to say that we *shall* be "ready" when we are "called upon," but we *are to be* ready beforehand. Our mind and soul is to be in an attitude of preparation. The mere saying, or the mere passive acquiescence, is after all nothing more than the untrimmed, oil-less lamp of the foolish virgin.

“Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My FATHER in Heaven.”

Let us apply this to our Lenten duties. There is no question in the world **■** to what they are. It would be **■** mere waste of time, and of precious time to prove them. The pulpit is not the place to prove, but to teach. People come from the outside to listen to what they think is going to be an argument about something, say about the existence of a God, or the observance of Lent. Then they think they are to go home, and to be convinced or not (as the case may be.) They are to find a flaw here, or a loophole there. They are to criticise this, or approve of that. Now if **■** Church were full of Infidels, or of Dissenters, there would be ground for such **■** theory. But as the Church is meant for the children of the Church, that is Church people, sermons are meant also (with the rarest exceptions perhaps) not to *prove* anything, but to *teach* people to do, and to put into practice, that which they have already accepted. Priest and people, we belong to a system. We belong to an Institution, a Society, in which there are but two classes, teachers and taught, and though there may be in minor matters of detail **■** certain amount of freedom of opinion, still we are bound to know, and *prepare* ourselves so far as we are concerned, to carry out into practice that which having been taught we do, or ought to

know, namely the *rules* of that system, to which we belong.

But here again I would fain guard myself. I do not mean for a moment that the mere *outward* act of obedience is sufficient when we apply it to the will of God, or the laws of the Church. Our obedience must be willing, cheerful and loving, as our worship should be spiritual, earnest, devout. heart and soul : mind and body : will and affections : memory and intellect : God gave them all, and God wants them all, in order that we should do, and prepare to do His will, and that chiefly and above all things in Church matters, which, after all, are matters which affect the well-being, and the eternal welfare of our souls and bodies.

Now I think I may venture to sum up our Lenten duties under four different heads. Repentance, Fasting, Almsgiving and Prayer ; the first and the last are those which all of us, not only can, but *must* observe. There are none so holy as not to need Repentance, obviously there are none who do not need Prayer, and both these, in a certain sense, at all times. But the object of Lent, so far as these two matters are concerned, is to cause those to repent who have not repented, and to deepen the repentance of those who have already turned to God.

Now how are we to repent, or how are we to have our repentance deepened ? The first and chief thing is to have ■ sense of sin, and further to have

a definite sense of sin : or more plainly still to have a definite sense of definite sins. We are bound to realize, that is, not only what sin is, but what *our* sins are : to feel not only what a terrible thing sin against God is, but how terrible a thing it is to us *each*, and *individually*, to have sinned against God ; not to be content in a word with general expressions of repentance, such as merely acknowledging ourselves to be sinners, but to try to get a portion at least of that spirit of contrition which made David cry, "My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up." Repentance however involves a great deal more than this. It is more than the sense of sin, or even the sorrow for sin. It involves the *acknowledgment* of sin. "I will acknowledge my transgressions," says David, "and my sin is ever before me." Supposing for instance in social life that we had offended ■ friend or a neighbour ; of what good would it be either to know that we have done so, or even to feel sorry, if we did not go and tell him, and not only tell him *generally*, but tell him the particular instance of our offence, and this with a view to obtain his forgiveness? Nor again would all this be complete as far as we are concerned, without ■ firm resolution on our part *not to offend again*. Nay, more, we should be prepared to undergo some needful *discipline*, greater or less as the case may be, in token of the sincerity of our repentance, and as a salutary *punishment*

for the past, and guard for the future. Now this is only common sense. And if you add to it that which we know of our LORD's will, namely His own commission to His apostles and the power left to His Church to absolve all those who truly repent and believe in Him, then we know how to proceed to get forgiveness. But in order that those sins should be forgiven, it is necessary that they should be told. So that really we have here under the head of Repentance, (1.) Self-examination to find out what our sins are or have been; (2.) Contrition, which is the sorrow for sin; (3.) Confession, which is the acknowledgment of sin; (4.) Absolution, which is the forgiveness of sin; (5.) Penance, which is the punishment of sin; (6.) Amendment, which is the resolution to forsake sin.

But next, Prayer must accompany all this: it must not only accompany it, but also precede and follow it. Lent is a special time of Prayer as it is a special time for Repentance. It is quite true that both Repentance and Prayer are duties for all times: but it is equally true that special efforts bring special blessings, and this is the very object of special seasons being set apart by the Church. As soldiers of CHRIST we are in one sense to be ever in a state of preparation, ever watching and fighting under His banner, but it is none the less needful, that there should be *special* times of watchfulness, or *special* battles for the victory over our spiritual enemy.

There are two other duties that remain, which must in some sense be fulfilled, but not necessarily so literally by all. All people in one sense cannot, and need not Fast. All people in one sense cannot give Alms. The very poor can do neither in their literal sense. Alas! to them often it is Lent in respect to Fasting all the year round. And the poor can rarely give much in Alms. But God does not require much from little. Still we must never forget that it was a "*poor widow*" who threw in her two mites, all her living, into the Offertory, and that that offering was especially singled out and blessed and accepted by our Blessed LORD. And we may be quite certain that our LORD would never have blessed that which He did not at least in some manner intend others to imitate.

Again, the aged, and the infirm, and the very young, and those whose work depends upon their strength are not *bound* to fast, but they *are* bound to abstain. There is a loophole provided for them if they choose to avail themselves of it. Nevertheless as a rule, though there may be exceptions, it would be a cold love which seeks to evade a plain law of the Gospel, and of the Church of CHRIST. The Gospel tells us that we are to fast, and the Church tells us when. To fast, I need not say, is not to eat for a given length of time. To abstain is to avoid certain food forbidden by Church rules. I once heard a very curious interpretation of the word "*fast*,"—I was told it was to

“fast from sin!” By this rule it would be quite clear that the Church meant us to keep from sin only forty days in the year and at certain other times; and this interpretation would positively make our Blessed LORD’s words profane, for He says to His Disciples, “When ye fast,” and if this meant only fasting from sin, it would by implication permit sin at other times. But there is a much simpler solution; the word in the original language is not ambiguous, there is no doubt about it. “When ye fast” in the Greek simply is, “when ye do not eat,” when ye abstain from eating. Of course the admission of this involves consequences, and therefore to avoid awkward conclusions, the world has its own interpretations. However that has nothing to do with us. We are in Church, Priest and people, as Children of the Church, bound to do GOD’s will.

But one word in conclusion. What preparation after all *are* we making for Lent? What rule have we set ourselves? There lie our duties before us,—we know them. Are we going to do them? Our duty of Repentance will lead us to Confession; our duty of Prayer will make us very frequent in GOD’s House, and more frequent, devout, and earnest both there and at home. Our duty of Fasting will make us try some definite rule, not overtasking our strength or unfitting us for work, but quite enough to enable us to feel a distinct and decided difference. Our duty of Almsgiv-

ing will make us lay aside something from our means, and in proportion to them, as an offering to God.

Now let all these duties come in the way of resolutions of preparation to each of us ; as for instance, shall we adopt the following ?

I will before the end of Lent, or oftener if need be, make my Confession to God in the presence of, and to His Priest.

I will set apart such and such times daily for increased Prayer, I will go daily if possible to Church.

I will give so much in Alms at the Offertory, or in some other way.

I will abstain from eating at stated times, from luxurious living, and also from social entertainments, which would be perfectly harmless at other times, but would certainly be harmful in Lent.

The fewer and simpler the rules the better. But remember it is almost as great a mistake to do too much, as to do too little in the matter of Fasting. We cannot well exceed in the other duties of Almsgiving, or Prayer, certainly not in that of Prayer !

SERMON XV.

Ash-Wednesday.

DUST THOU ART!

GENESIS III. 19.

“DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN.”

“THE LORD GOD formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” There is God’s account of man’s origin. “Behold now,” says Abraham, “I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes.” There is man’s acknowledgment of his own formation. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return!” There is God’s sentence upon humanity: there is the announcement of the ultimate end of man. To begin in dust and to end in dust!

The cradle and the coffin are not, in reality, so very far apart. The bed in which we nightly take our rest and the narrow bed in the cold

ground, are not so unlike. Sleep is but a type of death. It is, after all, only a question of time. To-day for me, to-morrow for thee. We hear of a death. We see a funeral pass. Or death is brought closer home to us still, even to our very doors, and within them. We hear of a death. We hear of it, it may be with indifference. Our eyes get accustomed to the sight of the dead borne to their long home. We get accustomed to see and to hear of deaths. Even when we have our dead in the midst of us, though our sorrow may be deep and real, yet by degrees it wears away. The wound gets healed. Our loss was a severe, it may be a fearful wrench to us, but we recover our balance, and, before very long, even the remembrance of our dead passes away from us, even as "the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day."

And, to a certain extent, this is well. We find fresh duties, and we form fresh ties. Time the great healer steps in. Religion smooths the rough places and pours in its oil and its wine: and then perhaps, we are apt not only to forget the dead, but also that we shall die ourselves. Did I say, *perhaps*? Nay it is for the most part the very first thing we forget, and the very last thing we realize. Yes, indeed! it is for the most part the one thing we are tempted to put away from us, to shut our eyes to, to ignore, to flee from, that one great awful certainty that we shall

die, that "dust we are, and unto dust shall we return."

All this is very natural, dear brethren, but it is very wrong. It is very foolish. It is very cowardly. It is very sinful. It is foolish, because we ought, at the very least, to think occasionally, of that which must happen to each one of us some day. It is cowardly, because we ought at any rate, to make some provision to meet and to face that which we cannot inevitably avoid. It is sinful, because our very feeling of avoiding the thought of death makes us indifferent about sin, makes us take low views of the sinfulness of sin, makes us forget that the "wages of sin is death." And if we take a low view of sin it is only another way of saying, that we take low views both of the love and of the justice of God.

And yet, surely, there is something very appalling in the thought of death. No one has come back to us from the dead to tell us what death is like: or what is, in reality, the after-death state. I mean the matter is not within our personal knowledge, far less experience. We must take it all on trust. All that we know is a matter of personal knowledge is, that men die, that death, day by day, and hour by hour, nay every minute is taking a victim here, and a victim there. We know, as a fact, that the body decays, and in a very very short time is indistinguishable from its surrounding, nay from

its kindred earth. But there is much food for thought even in this knowledge. We touch the surface of the great mystery. But the surface forces us to look deeper.

It is good for us to realize this preliminary stage. And for this reason; it excites a reaction in us. We begin to feel that though we were formed out of dust and that unto dust we must return, yet, grand, noble truth! that God not only created man out of the dust of the earth, but created him a living soul. We learn and begin to realise the fact that God not only made the matter of which man is formed, but added mind to it. We feel, and know, that life must live on. Then we are led further to the thought that therefore God has a future for that which He created. Else would God have created a vain thing, a purposeless thing, an empty thing.

And then, further, when we take Revelation into our aid, we know that God became Man, and assumed this dust of ours in assuming our human nature, that He, the Immortal, lived amongst us in the flesh, and died, and rose again, (though His Flesh saw no corruption, because sin which is the seed of corruption was not in Him) and ascended, in this dust of ours, as Man, and took it up into Heaven, in taking up our human nature, our very body, this very frail, perishable, mortal body, glorified indeed, but still our body, one formed

out of dust, took it into Heaven: nay into the very Heaven of Heavens!

So that there are two ways in which we may look at the dust of which we are made, two ways of looking at the clay of which we are formed: one, which is full of humbling thoughts, and the other full of hope and brightness.

This is Ash-Wednesday. A solemn day of Penitence and Fasting. Let me, as it is fitting on a day like this, dwell for a few moments, on the former of these. It is not without reason that I chose my text, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Lent is indeed one of those times intended by God in His Church, to make us have a truer estimate of life. But the end of life, the measure of life is death. As we live, so shall we die. Death came into the world by sin. And Lent is one of God's weapons against sin. It is sin which makes us dread death. And therefore the penitential discipline of Lent, as it turns us to God, or deepens our repentance, really and truly by counteracting sin in us, prepares us for death.

And what sin is it which most steels us against Repentance, which most draws us away from, and makes us rebel against the thought of death? Why, none other than the sin of pride, under any of its thousand specious forms. It is the pride of intellect which rebels against the truths of religion, because of their simplicity, or because of

their calls upon faith. It is the pride of life, in luxurious living which chokes up the avenues of the soul, and tempts us to centre our happiness in this life, and in its pleasures. It is the pride of personal appearance, or the utter folly of the pride of dress, which makes us think so much of a gaudy covering for the dust of which we are made. Take them all, and bring them one by one, face to face with God's original decree in the creation of man. Compare them with God's original sentence. Compare them with man's own admission of his origin in his forefathers. Put them side by side, with the solemn Ash-Wednesday warning of the Church : measure them by her words in the Burial office, and they all force home the thoughts of death, the one great solemn truth that out of the ground we were formed, that to it we must return, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return !"

Yes, but even to-day we will not forget the brighter side ! Who was that Apostle of old, who had the thought of death constantly before him, and yet wrote of it so joyously, looking through it to the life beyond the grave ? It was the same who so intensely realised and lived in the thought of death. It was he who wrote, "I die daily !" O no, it was not to him the mere daily risk of death that he ran amidst his many sufferings and persecutions. It was far more. That might have been to die once. But he died

“daily.” Daily dying was to him, the daily dying to self and selfishness. It was the mortifying, killing, putting to death all that was contrary to the life which he would fain live in CHRIST JESUS his LORD.

So here again we are met by the teaching of the Church. The object of Lent is not a mere spasmodic forty days’ effort of discipline, and self-denying ; of fasting, or prayer, or of almsgiving. But it is that we should form those habits in us *now*, so that they might become daily habits to us, incorporated in our daily lives, and last us through life, and prepare us for death. It is to subdue in us that which is averse to the formation of a CHRIST-like life in us, a life which can only be formed by dying to sin and to self. It is to reduce pride in us, whether it be the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. It is to make us remember whereof we are made, to make us estimate ourselves at our proper value, to make us remember indeed how very precious we are in God’s sight, as the work of His hands, and as the property redeemed for Him, by the infinite value of the price that was paid for us. Nevertheless, it is to make us remember that all we are and all we have, come from Him : that we are but the clay, (“fearfully and wonderfully made,” indeed) but still clay in the hands of the potter : that we are absolutely His, to do with us as He wills, that our very freedom of will

is given us by Him ; that body, soul, and spirit we belong to Him, for “ He made us, and not we ourselves !” He will require of us that which He gave us : He will require of us both this soul of ours, and this body of ours, which He has committed to our trust.

There is something very humiliating, but still there is something very sweet, is there not ? in the thought of death. It is *humbling*, because of that mighty power which levels all ranks, and reduces kings and peasants to their original dust. But still there is something sweet, for to die (if it be for us, each of us, and pray God it may be !) the “ Death of the righteous,” and if our “ last end be like his,” then indeed death will, after laying us down in peace, and taking our rest, death will only be the grave and gate through which we may pass to our eternal rest and our eternal glory. Yes, “ though after my skin worms destroy this body,” and reduce it to its original dust, “ yet in my flesh shall I see God,” Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another. “ Mine eyes shall see the King in His beauty : they shall behold the Land which is very far off.”

SERMON XVI.

Lent.

PARTICULAR EXAMINATION.

PSALM CXXXIX. 23.

“TRY ME, O GOD, AND SEEK THE GROUND OF MY HEART :
PROVE ME AND EXAMINE MY THOUGHTS. LOOK WELL IF
THERE BE ANY WAY OF WICKEDNESS IN ME : AND LEAD ME IN
THE WAY EVERLASTING.”

To place ourselves in the Presence of God, is, or ought to be, I suppose, the beginning, middle and end of all real acts of religion. To know God is to be known of God. But to know God, or to be known of God, we must place ourselves in His Presence. To see God is not only to be seen, but to realise that we *are seen* of God. In other words, it is to realise God's Presence.

What is worship? What are the Sacraments? What is Meditation? What are they all but the placing ourselves in the presence of, and knowing, and seeing God? It is the one thing we seek for,

or ought to seek for, in *all* our religious acts. This is the one great central truth of religion. Nay, it is not only a central truth, but it should be carried into all its details.

The whole life of the Christian man is the perpetual placing himself in the presence of God. He would fain dwell in the Presence of God *hereafter*, and therefore he perpetually recalls to himself the Presence of God *here*.

So should it be when temptations assail us. What is the one great safeguard against the sudden assaults of our spiritual enemy? Why the realizing, and placing ourselves in the Presence of God! What is to be done when we find ourselves gradually drifting nearer and nearer to some dangerous ground where we shall, (unless we take the matter firmly and at once in hand,) make shipwreck of our souls? Why, the bringing this soul of ours, by a mighty effort, a will acting in conformity with the will of God, bringing this soul, I say, face to face with God. Making that soul feel that God sees it, knows it, loves it, but yet will punish it; making this soul feel what a glorious and yet what an awful thing it is to have such a God as this for our God; a God Who is so near to us as not only to be about our path, and about our bed, but Who spies out *all* our ways; ■ God with Whom darkness is no darkness at all, but the night is as clear as the day; a God to Whom darkness and light are both alike: ■ God

Who not only sees but knows, and not only knows but foreknows our every thought, word, and deed ; Who knows them each and all at their outset, in their issue, in their result ; Who searches and seeks them out not by any effort, but by the mere exercise of His attribute of Omniscience and Omnipotence of knowing all, of seeing all, and of being everywhere.

Well may this lovely Psalm from which our Text is taken begin, "O LORD, Thou hast searched me out and known me : Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising, Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a *word* in my tongue but Thou, O LORD, knowest it altogether. Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me, I cannot attain unto it."

Yes, indeed, simple as this truth is, and quite ready as we are to admit it, yet we do fail, the very best of us to realise its effects and consequences to ourselves. We fail to bear in mind that *be* where we will, or *go* where we will, we are always and everywhere in the Presence of God ; or again, as this same dear Psalm has it, "Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from Thy Presence ? If I climb up into Heaven, Thou art there ; if I go down to Hell Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the

morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy Hand lead me, and Thy Right Hand shall hold me."

Now it is this realising, that is, placing himself in the Presence of God which makes David in this Psalm realise *himself*. After thus, in the former part of the Psalm, making as it were his meditation, after placing himself and realising the Presence of God, he begins to speak *to* God, as he says elsewhere, "My heart hath talked of Thee, Seek ye My face: Thy face, LORD, will I seek." He breaks out into acts of faith, and love, and adoration. "How dear," he says, "are Thy counsels unto me, O God; O how great is the sum of them. If I tell them they are more in number than the sand." And *then* he adds, "When I wake up I am present with Thee"—he has arrived at a further stage! He says now not only as before, "Thou art present with me," but "I am present with Thee." And so from realising the Presence of God with him, he realises his own presence with God and before God. He realises, that is, what it really is to be in God's Presence! He feels, now having realised this, how needful it is that he should be purified and fitted for the Presence of Him Who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," or to "look on iniquity," and so he concludes this Psalm in the searching words of our text. "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me and examine my

thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me: and lead me in the way everlasting."

Now observe, dear brethren, he does not say here as in another Psalm *generally*, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me, try out my reins and my heart." But here he says, "Seek the *ground* of my heart," "examine my *thoughts*," "look well if there be," not only wickedness generally, but "any way," any particular "way" of wickedness in me! And not only so, but, he adds, "lead me in the way everlasting." It is as if the "man after God's own heart" would say, "Teach me not only to uproot sin generally, but 'any' sin which is my particular besetting sin; any sin which is the remote or immediate cause of my constant falls. Teach me this indeed, but teach me more; not only teach me to cease to do evil, but also to learn to do well: 'lead me,' not only *away* from sin, but lead me by the pardon of sin, and by the acquiring of grace, of that particular grace of which I stand most in need, 'lead me in the way everlasting.'"

You will have observed, dearest brethren, that both the Psalm and the text which I have chosen, and the way in which I have endeavoured to treat it, bring me to the special subject for our meditation this evening, namely, that of Particular Self-examination.

The difference between general and particular

self-examination may perhaps be best described ■ the difference between a picture or sketch, and a survey of a country. In ■ picture you obtain the *general* outline and characteristics of a country; but in a survey you get more *accurate* details, and that for particular and practical purposes. Let me give you the words of a great spiritual writer to explain my meaning—he says, “Besides the *general* care which we ought to have to cleanse the soul of all its vices and sins, it is very convenient to employ ■ particular study to eradicate some *one* vice of those that tend most to endanger us.” And again another—“Particular self-examination consists in examining oneself in detail, and frequently, on some one particular subject; it may be a sin to avoid, or ■ grace to gain, or the manner in which we perform some special devotion. Its object is not only to discover what our sins are, as we do in our general self-examination, but also our lesser faults and imperfections.” And this, probably, because what we call our lesser faults lie at the root of our greater sins. Our lesser faults are our most frequent faults. And our more frequent faults show us the tendency of our character or temperament.

Yes, my brethren, the more we think of it, the better we shall see the great importance of this duty of particular self-examination. Its advantages are very great. It tends to make us know ourselves thoroughly. And “self-knowledge is

often the only way to the knowledge of God." It makes our conscience active and on the alert. It deepens the sense of sin in us, and therefore also it deepens our love for God. It makes us take a high standard in religion. It makes us aim at perfection, according to our Blessed LORD's own words, "Be ye perfect, even as your FATHER in Heaven is perfect." It makes us acquainted with our spiritual state. It teaches us to know whether we are gaining or losing ground; whether we are advancing or falling back in the Christian race. It never lets us rest satisfied with ourselves as we think we are, or dream that we are, and therefore it is a great guard against spiritual sloth. It makes us realise that we are soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, and therefore, as soldiers, bound to act on the offensive as well as on the defensive. We feel that the "ground of our heart" has been invaded. We feel, or begin to fear that an enemy, (perhaps even a secret enemy,) has virtual possession of our King's domain, or at least that he is tampering with some portion of it. We feel that we are not safe until we are quit of him. We begin to know that we can make *no* terms with him. We say in the spirit of David, "I will follow upon mine enemies and overtake them: neither will I turn again till I have destroyed them," till "there is not one of them left." We find out, and attack these enemies of ours, one by one. We know, as with the Israelites and the Seven Nations

of the Land of Canaan, that we cannot, it may be, "consume them at once" but "by little and little!"

But we have a duty to perform beyond this, for beyond the mere ridding the country of these enemies, we would cultivate our land. We long to make it, as it was once, when we were fresh from our Baptismal Purity, as the "garden of the LORD." We would "plant, and sow, and reap, and bring forth fruits of increase." That is well: right well. But more yet. We must see what are *the* fruits of which we stand most in need; what are most suited to the soil, or rather what would best please the LORD, when He calls the labourers to give them their hire. Now then in order to do this, we must carefully watch the growth of the heavenly plant, and water it with the tears of penitence, and foster and ripen it with the sunshine of the Sacraments!

To bring the matter to a practical issue, let us retrace our steps. First then, and of course, we are bound fairly to face the fact, that in proportion as a thing is good for our souls, in that proportion exactly, we shall find difficulty in practising it. "My son," the wise man says, "if thou come to serve the LORD, prepare thy soul for Temptation." And the reverse is almost, if not quite as true, "if thou do *not* come to serve the LORD, there will be no need to prepare thyself against temptation; for there would be no need for the Devil to tempt thee." The Devil will of

course always seek occasion to make us ignore, and forget the presence of God. Any cloud he can interpose to hide, as it were, God's face from us, he will interpose. Therefore no doubt in beginning the practice of Particular self-examination, or indeed of self-examination at all, we shall be tempted by what seems the difficulty of the task. We are tempted to get alarmed at the high standard put before us. We shall be tempted even through, what we think, our humility by saying, "This is all very well for great saints, or Ecclesiastics, or Religious, but I am only an ordinary Christian." Or again from another class of mind another kind of difficulty may arise, expressed perhaps, somewhat thus. "This duty of particular self-examination, may tend to make me overscrupulous. I should always be fretting and worrying my conscience, and so I should get to despair of being any better, when I discover how often I fall, how little, how very little, if at all, I progress." Or once more, another might say, and with perfect truth, "I am sure I should get wearied of it. It would be such a strain on me. Life would be a burden to me. I should be afraid of every word I speak, much more of every action I do."

Well, dearest brethren, I venture to think that in all these things, or at least in most of them, we first *make*, and then we *magnify* our own difficulties, and *that*, at least very often, to avoid what undoubtedly is ■ great help and a great

blessing, I may almost call it the great duty of particular self-examination.

Let me put aside the difficulties, real or imaginary, and assume that we believe it to be at least a help and a blessing, and so let me mention to you in conclusion some brief rules for our mutual assistance.

First, and throughout all, we must try to realize and place ourselves in the presence of God.

Second. We must ask the help of His HOLY SPIRIT to teach us to see ourselves as we really are, not as we think ourselves to be, not as our friends tell us, but as we really are.

Third. We should find out what sin or sins most easily beset us: in a word what are our special temptations. They often lie far out of sight. They are clever at concealing themselves. There are numbers of ways of finding them out, but I must not stop to mention them.

Fourth. We should find out in what grace or graces we are specially wanting. Or we may take some particular act of devotion, and try ourselves about that, and see whether we are regular, punctual, earnest, or the reverse about it.

We may be quite sure if we do this as in the Presence of God, quietly, calmly, but yet earnestly, lovingly, heartily, we shall make all the greater way in fighting against other sins as well, and not only so, but gain ground, and progress in acquiring

other virtues, besides those for which we are especially trying.

Practically and to sum up, each one of us may say, "I know I have a besetting sin. I know I have some one special failing, some one special weak point in my character. I know I am wanting in some special virtue. I know that through this sin I fall into many other sins. I know that I lose other graces, through wanting this special grace."

Then make a resolution, "I will daily, or from time to time examine myself about this sin, or this grace, I will see how often I fall into, or how often I avoid it. What progress I am making, or whether I am falling back. I will see whether I am really being fitted for the Eternal unveiled Presence of GOD: whether I am allowing myself to be led by His HOLY SPIRIT in the way everlasting, whether I am trying to get out of my heart, any way, and every 'way of wickedness,' by advancing and growing daily in the grace and knowledge of my LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

"Try me, O GOD, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me and examine my thoughts.

"Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the Way Everlasting!"

SERMON XVII.

Lent.

THE HOUSE OF THE SOUL.

S. LUKE VI. 49.

“THE RUIN OF THAT HOUSE WAS GREAT.”

THIS is not the only place in Holy Scripture, where this remarkable expression occurs: although we do not, in the other passage, in which it does occur, find it in exactly the same form. Instead of reading, as we do here, the “ruin of that House was great,” we read in the parallel passage in S. Matthew’s Gospel, “great was the fall of it.”

Both expressions of course refer to the same circumstance. And both were spoken by our Blessed LORD on the same occasion, that is, at the end of the sermon on the Mount. They refer to one of those similitudes, which are not ordinarily included under the head of the Parables, but yet are so much like them, that it

makes it hard to distinguish, and to say why they are excluded.

S. Luke in the Chapter from which our text is taken, and S. Matthew in this seventh Chapter of his Gospel, both give us this similitude, or Parable. It is well worthy of our special attention, for never was a more graphic, and never also a more, on the one hand comforting, and on the other, more terrible picture. We have here a Parable of Religion, true or false. It is a Parable of the soul of man. It is a Parable of the salvation, or the "ruin" or "fall" of the soul. It is a Parable of cleaving to or falling away from CHRIST: of persevering, or falling away from Grace.

Let me try first to give you some little insight into the accompanying circumstances, of this Parable, as I shall continue to call it, and then to interlace the accounts as given by the two Evangelists. Our Blessed LORD was just concluding His Sermon on the Mount: that marvellous exposition of moral theology which is at the same time the model for all preachers, and the summary of holy living for all hearers of all times. "The people" we read, "were astonished at His Doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." They had listened to Him with pleasure. The common people especially heard Him gladly. Much no doubt as they were attracted by the "gracious

words" He spoke, and much as no doubt on many occasions they felt that His "word was with power," yet it was not improbable that one thing at least commended itself to them, and that was our LORD's frequent denunciation of the "Scribes and Pharisees."

But the object of our LORD's Teaching was not to strike with astonishment only, far less was it to foster a censorious, uncharitable spirit, as between class and class. That, be far from us! For it would be rank blasphemy, and utter folly so to think. No! the object of our Blessed LORD's teaching was to force home plain truths, and to bring *all* men to Repentance, of whatever class or rank they were. He was neither (with reverence be it said) a demagogue, or a democrat, or on the other hand, an aristocrat. He came not to startle by eloquence. He spoke and acted, not to attract by novelty, but to win by love, and to convince, and to convict all men of sin.

Let me then, try to interlace these two accounts, as I said, from the Gospels of S. Matthew and S. Luke, for the one Evangelist supplements, and gives point to the expressions of the other.

The introduction to this Parable in either case is not unlike. "Not every one that *saith* unto Me, LORD, LORD," says S. Matthew, "shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of My FATHER in Heaven." "Why *call* ye Me LORD, LORD," says S. Luke, "and *do* not

the things which I say." "Many will *say* unto Me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, 'Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.'"
Hence we gather first that it is not the preaching CHRIST, it is not the working of miracles, it is not frequent prayers, but it is the *doing* the will of God, and the *keeping* the sayings of JESUS, which will alone save the soul. It is not profession in short, but practice, it is not the *name* of a Christian, much less of a professor or teacher of Christianity, but the life of a Christian, whether teacher or hearer; it is not the preaching or the talking, but the keeping of the commandments, in all their fulness, which will alone avail to enable us to enter into Eternal Life, whether we be Priests or lay people.

Now let us compare these two accounts of this Parable, as they stand. "*Therefore,*" says our Blessed LORD by His Evangelists, S. Matthew and S. Luke, "whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth these sayings of Mine, or these My sayings, and *doeth* them, I will liken him, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a wise man which built an House having digged deep, and having laid the foundation on a rock. And the rain descended, and the flood arose and came, and the winds blew, and the stream beat vehe-

mently upon that House, and it *fell not*; they *could not shake it*; for it was founded upon ■ Rock.

“But he, and every one, that heareth My sayings, these sayings of Mine, and doeth them *not*, shall be like to a foolish man, a man that *without a foundation*, built a House upon the sand, or upon the earth; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and the stream beat vehemently upon that House, and immediately it fell, and great was the fall of it,” or in the words of the text, “the ruin of that House was great.”

The whole point of the Parable evidently turns upon this House having, or not having a “foundation,” and added to this, that this foundation should be well laid, and secure, stable, and permanent.

Now, what could this House be, but the Soul of Man? And what is its Foundation but CHRIST, as it is written, “I will lay in Sion a Corner Stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded.” And again, “other Foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST.” What can be meant by the “wind” and the “flood” and the “stream” beating vehemently upon this House, but the assaults or the undermining attacks, which the Soul receives through temptation to sin, or through trials of faith? What can be the

“sand” or “earth,” but a superficial religion, with no depth and no solidity about it? What else can it mean but fair weather religion which is simply effeminate, and will stand no test or trial: a religion which makes a fair outward show, but has no vital power, a “form of godliness without the power thereof;” a tree with leaves but no fruit; a tree whose promise is fair, but whose performance is a deception; a whited sepulchre, outwardly beautiful, but full of dead men’s bones within: or like one of those far famed Dead Sea apples, fair to look at, but full of ashes within. Such-like, in a measure, is a Religion without a Foundation: a Soul which does not rest upon CHRIST.

Well then here we have in a few simple words a test to apply to the truth or untruth, to the power and vitality, or the deadness and unreality of our religion. We are fairly warned. We are told what to expect. We are told how *alone* we can “stand” and “withstand in the evil day.” That “evil day” will come. Nay that “evil day” is ever! Christianity is always, in some form or another, on its trial! From the time when the cry of old was, “the Christians to the lions,” down to this time, when the assault is just as vehement, and indeed in some sense, *more* vehement. I mean now when the stream of infidelity or spiritual wickedness in high places, or the luxury of the age, or the attacks of rationalism,

or infidelity, or the storm of adverse public opinion, are all beating vehemently upon us, Churchmen and Christians: Christianity, take it as you will, of the Church or of the individual Christian soul, is always on its trial, our House is always the object of attack.

This being so, what are we to do? I need not tell you how to resist, you know it, as well as, if not better than I do. It is an old old tale and yet always one worth repeating, "Be strong in the LORD, and in the power of His might." Yes, "be strong," but also be humble. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." See upon what you are standing: sound your Religion to its very depths: see that you rest upon a secure Foundation; "examine yourselves, prove your own selves, whether ye be in the Faith." It is not the mere outward passive assent; it is not the mere conforming to the outward acts of Religion: it is not the merely saying, "LORD, LORD," but it is the doing the will of the Heavenly FATHER, which secures us. We are to be ready to do it in act, and not in word only. We are to be willing to bear all, endure all, it may be even to give up all for the love of CHRIST, and the love of His Cross. And it is just *that* which turns the "evil day," into a good day, and it is just *that* which, when we appear to be most cast down, enables us to stand.

That time, whether of enduring or of giving up,

may not be so far distant as we are apt sometimes to think. But come when it may, let us be bold, and confident, and yet quiet and humble; let us make quite sure that our House, this Soul of ours, is built upon the Rock, is in union with CHRIST. And then the "waves of the stream," the deep waters of the proud may rage terribly, and dash themselves vehemently, but they only dash themselves in vain, and fall back in empty froth. But let us beware on the other hand that our home is not built upon the shifting, treacherous sand, or upon the loose unstable earth: but upon the Rock. Let us be sure that our Foundation rests upon true, and not upon false Religion; upon CHRIST and not upon the world: upon principle and not upon predilection: upon practice and not upon profession.

And in the last place, let us take heart of grace, and draw our comfort from these blessed words of S. Paul, when he says, that we "*are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the Household of God; and are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST being the chief Corner Stone: in Whom all the Building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the LORD.*"

But once more, on the other hand, let us be watchful! Never could we have a more fearful picture, of a ruined fallen Soul, under the image

of this ruined fallen House. O think of this Soul ! It is a Soul which God created, and for which CHRIST died, but both creation and redemption were of no avail to it. It is ■ Soul which of its own free will and choice has been left desolate ; ■ Soul once made holy, like the “ Temple of the LORD,” but yet like that same Temple, with not one stone left upon another ; a Soul deprived of the last vestige of grace : a Soul of which the material was so good and so precious ; a Soul “ fearfully and wonderfully made” and yet a Soul which by its own choice built upon another Foundation than that Rock, which was its only secure one : and so a Soul which in the needful time of trouble had nought upon which to stand, nought upon which to rest, and therefore it fell ! It was ruined. And “ the ruin” and the “ fall of that Soul was great !”

Alas, that “ ruin” and that “ fall” was all the greater, in proportion to the graces with which that Soul had been endowed : all the greater in proportion to the height of Holiness to which it had reached, or rather in this case appeared to have reached ! Others looked upon it and wondered at its loftiness and apparently beautiful proportions. But alas it had no Foundation and it fell !

“ And thou, Capernaum,” it may be said of that Soul, “ which art exalted up to Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell :” thou Soul which art

lifted up, and livest at ease, and thinkest that one day shall be as another, and yet more abundant ! Thou Soul which makest so fair a show and art so false in reality, shalt be brought low, and made desolate, and be ruined and fall, because thou hadst no Foundation ; thy Foundation was not thy CHRIST, the Rock of thy Salvation !

SERMON XVIII.

Midlent Sunday.

THE DANGER OF RELAPSE.

S. JOHN VI. 66.

“FROM THAT TIME FORTH MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES WENT BACK, AND WALKED NO MORE WITH HIM.”

FROM what time? Why, from that very time when, of all times, one would think, they would wish never more to be separated from Him! at the very time when He was bringing them, as it were, into the inner circle of His Love: at the very time when, from a merely temporal point of view, He had the strongest and greatest claim upon their gratitude. But this word “time” does not occur in the original. So we may take it either, as from that “time,” or from that “saying;” that is, in consequence of something He, the Blessed LORD had just said, “His Disciples went back.”

But it was not only “from that time,” or that “saying,” but “from that time *forth*,” or from

that time forward, that, not one here or there, but "*many*," not of His casual hearers only, but "of His Disciples," those, that is who had been, more or less, under His own immediate teaching, who had, more or less, thrown in their lot with Him: who had overcome their first prejudices: who had, at least ostensibly and openly enrolled themselves amongst His followers: "from that time forth many of His *Disciples* went back."

They left Him; they fell away from Him. They fell back to their former life. Without any further question asked, or explanation sought, they "went back," went back never to return! and from being of the number of "Disciples," they "walked no more with Him."

Yes! the call upon their faith had been too great! They recoiled from the consequences of what they believed; or rather they did not anticipate such consequences. And no doubt it was a very great call; one which required a very considerable sacrifice of previous knowledge, of previous convictions, of private judgment; one which involved a very real and a very definite belief. These Disciples might, perhaps, and would no doubt, as far as they were concerned, have remained with Him. They might have remained, and perhaps have even believed after a listless and acquiescent and passive fashion.

Or even they might have remained with Him contented to go certain lengths, and it may be to

considerable lengths, in faith and practice. They might be ready to give up much for Him; indeed they *had* given up much, or at least something for Him, but now, at length, the probe had entered too deep, the limit of their faith had been reached; and though, perhaps, they were willing, with a quiet mental reserve, to forsake much and to believe much, yet unquestioning faith and perfect self-renunciation was beyond them. They would believe nothing rather than too much. Up the mountain was too rugged a path. They looked back to the cities of the plain. The plain had an horizon by which only their vision was bounded. Up the mountain they could not see beyond each step!

And so "From that time forth many of His Disciples went back, and walked no more with Him!"

For one moment let us think upon what occasion this was. Let us recall to our minds when this happened. You know that this is Midlent, or Refreshment Sunday; it is the Sunday upon which is commemorated that great and loving miracle of our dear LORD by which He fed five thousand persons with five barley loaves and two small fishes.

But it was not the working of this miracle which made these Disciples go "back," and leave JESUS. Nay they were only too anxious to go forward. Ay! and *too* forward. Like many merely professing Christians, or nominal "Dis-

ciples" often are, they were overeager, and over-enthusiastic, and overzealous. They were superficial. They jumped at conclusions, in which nothing is concluded, and then tried to act at once upon them, and this chiefly in order to further their own interests, or their own ambition or their own short-sighted views of what was fitting. Many of these "disciples" had been loud enough and noisy enough in proclaiming their belief. "This is of a truth," some said, "that prophet which should come into the world!" They wanted, when they had seen the miracle, to force things on faster than in God's Providence it was determined they ought to go. It was another sure and certain sign of the weakness of their faith, for observe that they even wished, in their "zeal without discretion," and without humility, to take JESUS "by force," (by force!) and "to make Him a king."

Let us follow the sacred narrative. We read that "on the day following," (following, that is, the performance of the miracle)—the people, and those "Disciples" too, came after JESUS, and found Him "on the other side of the sea." They followed and were at some trouble to follow Him, they came some considerable distance after Him. They now themselves begin, and are forward to begin, a conversation with Him. They address Him by a title of respect and confidence. "Rabbi," they say, "when camest Thou hither?"

And now our LORD Himself speaks. Observe how, from alluding to the miracle of the previous day, He takes occasion to found upon it, and gradually to unfold that wonderful, mysterious, but beyond all power of our human words to express, and our thoughts to conceive, that soul-penetrating and soul-consoling, and all-important doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and of His own Blessed Presence in It.

Then occurred the great trial of their faith; up to this point they had had but little difficulty.

Again, notice that, at different stages of this teaching of our dear LORD, the people, or the Disciples, seemed to pass through many and varied phases of mind. Notice how, from a kind of belief, they came to questioning, from questioning to doubting and suggesting difficulties; thence to murmuring; from murmuring to disbelieving; from disbelieving to forsaking Him, and at last, from this point, to going back, and walking "no more with Him!"

I am giving you only a very brief summary or outline of, perhaps (if I may so say) one of the most important chapters in the whole Bible: but I must leave you to trace out for yourselves the consecutive events of this Sixth Chapter of S. John's Gospel.

You cannot and will not then fail to perceive how they seemed, at one time, the people, at another, the Disciples, to be unstable, and shifting

in their belief, how they really did waver like, (as S. James says,) “a wave of the sea;” how almost in a breath they seemed to be willing and unwilling; to be touched and hardened, to be ready to go forward and then to hold back. At one time they say unto Him quite eagerly, “LORD, evermore give us this Bread;” but, as it proved after all, they meant nothing real; this was the mere husk and shell of belief, for when our LORD spoke of *Himself*, and of Himself in the Blessed Sacrament as the Bread of Life; *when* there was no mistaking His meaning; *when* they could put no fictitious and non-natural interpretation upon what He said; when there was no evading its plain sense, “the Jews *then* murmured at Him.” The LORD’s teaching becomes plainer and plainer, and more and more unmistakeable, even to the revealing of that great mystery of the veritable eating of the Flesh and drinking the Blood of the Son of Man, nay, of so doing as a positive necessity, and condition of the Spiritual life—“Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you,”—*then the Disciples* murmured, and many, “when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying: who can hear it?”

And then, when the final appeal comes, when our LORD *adds* to this, the great call upon them for full and trusting faith, and simple reliance upon the power of God, and upon His own power

as God (with Whom all things are possible) ; when He directs their attention to look upon Faith, not as the mere conviction of the intellect, but as the yielding of the will, or rather as the “gift of God,” when *this* was required of them, then “from that time forth many of His Disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.”

“They walked no more with Him!” “No more!” O what mournful words ! O how inexpressibly sad ! If the word “last” is a trying word to us, when we part from our dearest friend, what ought it to have been to those Disciples to go back, to go away *of their own accord*, to leave, to part from JESUS, to walk with Him “no more !”

No more ! Yes, my brethren, even when JESUS had told them that the very purpose of His coming down from Heaven was not only to give His Life for them, but to give Himself to be their life in them ; to give in one sense *more* than His life, not once only, but even *continually* to give Himself to them to be their “spiritual Food and Sustenance,” without which their souls would wither away, and perish, and die, and be lifeless : *then* they left Him ; *then* they “walked no more with Him !”

We can almost picture the whole scene for ourselves, and (O, so vividly !) that period of it, when one after another of the Disciples, first perplexed and then offended at that in which they should have most rejoiced, silently went away and left the Blessed Presence, doubting and dis-

believing the words of the very Truth Himself. Yes indeed, by so doing they would fain be "wiser in their generation" than, not only "the children of light," but wiser than the very Light Himself!

Easter is drawing near. Again I leave this application of the subject to yourselves. At this Service of the Faithful, at this Holy Communion Service, I need not dwell upon that aspect of the text which is a great warning to half-disciples, or disciples up to a certain point, who leave their LORD'S Presence, and who go away at the risk of walking "no more with Him," but still a wide field for reflection remains, upon which I touch in a very few words.

Let us remember that that which is true of the great doctrine inculcated in this chapter of S. John's Gospel is true also of many, many particulars of our daily life. But still the one is, as it were, the hinge or the clue to the other.

I. When are we not tempted to "go back?" How often do we feel inclined to relax a little in the strictness and uprightness of our life? We persuade ourselves that we can make it all up at another time. We tell ourselves, and we delude ourselves into the belief that we do not want to leave JESUS altogether. We only want to be prudent and discreet, and draw back a little. It shall be, we say at first, "only for a little while," and then we will return. Never was a more subtle device of our enemy. To "go back" in any one act of

religion is sure to lead to going back in many ways. A backward step is a fatal step! That is almost an axiom in matters of religious belief.

II. Then, again, how often does a sudden temptation to disbelief come upon us when some *new truth* in religion is opened out to us, some truth which we ought to know and prize, and to cherish as our very lives. How often are we tempted to say "This is impossible: this is contrary to common sense: this is mere enthusiasm or a dream," or worse still, we fancy we detect a deeply laid design, on the part of our teachers, to promote some private end, or interest of their own. We say, "this is going too far: I shall 'go back,' I do not know where this will lead me. I do not understand this. I never heard of this before." And all the while, we are only being led and drawn closer to JESUS by the very trial of our faith and of our love, in the submission of our wills!

Well, then, let us lay this well to our hearts. Circumstances will and must arise, which from time to time will and must severely test our faith. They will and must occur to us collectively as members of a branch of the Catholic Church, and to each of us as individuals.

To take an instance out of many. We cannot but feel that, as Church people, throughout the whole length and breadth of England, we are undergoing an ordeal. I do not mean only in

such matters, as threatened political disturbances or sickness, or war, but in the Church herself. Our very lives are wearied with disputings about this point of Ritual or that. Well then, such temptations as these for instance, may, ay, perhaps must needs come to the thoughtful at times. We are tempted to say, "All systems are equally true, or equally false;" or again, "I will give up the whole thing, and let these children quarrel about their toys." "Toys," however, none may dare to call them, who believe in the Presence of the LORD in the Church, and in His Sacraments. But still one can quite well imagine the trial that it is to some people. Only let us always remember that to "give up" is to go back, and to run the risk of walking "no more" with JESUS.

Then comes another temptation which perhaps will take this form; we are tempted to say to ourselves, "I will seek a Church in which these things, if they are essentials, are fully recognised, and where, if there is disputing, it is at least about things which touch vital points." This delusion too, must be fairly met, but as surely set aside. It is only an exchange of difficulties, and a choice of evils. As long as we have the heritage of the Catholic Faith, as long as we have a lawful Priesthood and valid Sacraments, so long is the ship in which we are embarked sea-worthy; so long no one has a right—nay, it is an act of cowardice, if not of treachery, on the part of any,

above all of her officers, to desert her; so long "JESUS is in the ship," and if we desert her, we desert Him, if we leave her we "go back" and leave Him!

It is true, my brethren, that we have not as these half-hearted and backsliding disciples had, the visible and palpable Presence of the LORD among us. Invisibly and as really He *is* present with us; but, (and this is the practical point) as individuals, and especially the more thoughtful of us, we must have, and must expect to have from time to time, severe shocks, great perplexities, distressing doubts in matters of religion and of our faith. Be it so. GOD sees fit so to ordain it. These difficulties may reach, from what are apparently very trifles to the shaking of the foundations of our spiritual life. And what then? Well, even then, GOD forbid, in His mercy, that from that time we should "go back," and "walk no more with JESUS."

In conclusion let us weigh well and dwell lovingly upon, and prize the blessed words, the next words, that follow the text, and take courage. Let us see and take example from the little faithful band continuing more closely to "walk with JESUS." Hear that pleading Voice as it said, "Will YE also go away?" Then let us take to ourselves and make our own the words of the faithful loving spokesman of the Twelve. "Then," we read, "Simon Peter answered Him, LORD, to

whom *shall* we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of the Living God."

"To whom shall we go?" To whom indeed! "None but God can save us. None but man can suffer for and sympathise with us. And Thou art God and Man. The Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world. Thou art the Propitiation for our sins; the Life of our souls; our Spiritual Food. Thou art our 'Shepherd,' therefore we can 'lack nothing.' Thou hast 'prepared a Table' for us 'in the wilderness.' 'To whom,' indeed, 'shall we,' *can* we 'go?' We *will* not leave Thee. We *will* not 'go back.' From this time forward we will walk nearer to Thee. Nay, we will dwell with Thee, and Thou shalt dwell in us. Are we not Thy disciples whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy love? We have not seen Thee but by the eye of faith, and yet we have believed. We do believe. We will believe."

But even from the Twelve let us take warning. "JESUS answered them, 'Have not I chosen you Twelve, and one of you is a devil?' He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the Twelve."

One, you see, even of the Twelve! One that did not *then* go back. One who continued walking with Him for a time. One who remained with Him even to the very fulfilment of the pro-

mise of this very Chapter. One who sat at meat with Him. One who was trusted by Him. One who was with Him *nearly* to the end. Nearly,—but not quite! Nearly, within a few hours of the end. Yes! but on those words hangs the whole of our salvation, on those little words, “Nearly or Quite!”

It is written, “He that endureth,” not “nearly,” but “he that endureth to the end:” he that endureth through trial, and perplexity, and scandal, and persecution, through evil report and good report, through prosperity and adversity, “He that endureth to the end,” he, and he only “shall be saved!”

God, of His mercy, grant, for JESU’S sake, that it may be so with each of us; that we, each one of us, may endure to the end, may walk with JESUS, and dwell in JESUS, and JESUS in us, until we be with JESUS through all Eternity. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

Fourth Friday in Lent.

AVOID PRAISE, ACCEPT MORTIFICATIONS.

S. JOHN VI. 15.

“WHEN JESUS THEREFORE PERCEIVED THAT THEY WOULD COME AND TAKE HIM BY FORCE TO MAKE HIM A KING, HE DEPARTED AGAIN INTO A MOUNTAIN HIMSELF ALONE.”

THERE is a mysterious and very beautiful analogy between the circumstance to which the text refers and another incident of our Blessed LORD's life. The parallel is so remarkable that, when you hear it, you will wonder that you have not thought of it before, if indeed you have not done so already. But of this later on.

Yes, dear brethren, in the Gospel, in the “good news” of GOD, there are things,—O so numberless!—ever old and ever new, ever changing and ever the same. From that Fountain of Life, the Life of CHRIST, there are ever springing up, fresh, and pure, and lifegiving streams !

Or, it may be, as when one travels through a beautiful country, each turn of the road brings some fresh hitherto hidden beauties into view; and yet, on the whole, the country we see is the same. So it is with the Blessed Life of the Blessed LORD. We may look upon it as always the same, yet ever changing. We may look upon it like a landscape in the early morning, or the bright noon day, or in the solemn eventide. It is the same, ever the same, yet with fresh beauties according to the light in which we see it, nay even according to the very shadows which the clouds throw over it. Yes, indeed, it is this very overshadowing of some one part of it which throws some other part into brighter relief.

Let me then at starting remind you that the words of the text form as it were a sequel to that incident of our LORD's life which refers to one of His greatest miracles, namely, that of the miraculous multiplication of the "five barley loaves, and the two small fishes." This miracle had just been wrought. Five thousand men, "beside," as S. Matthew tells us, "women and children," had been fed, with five barley loaves and two small fishes. The very remnants of the feast were greater than the stock with which they started. "They filled twelve baskets with the fragments."

Now the first effect of this miracle upon them, was that "those men, when they had seen the

miracle that JESUS did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." They recognised in a measure, and in connection with this miracle, our Blessed LORD's Prophetical, as in the miracle itself He had shown forth His sacerdotal or Priestly character. Perhaps they imagined that, (as indeed elsewhere they said,) Moses had re-appeared amongst them, and had given "bread from heaven to eat." Be this as it may, it is quite evident that the thought arose in the hearts of some of them, a thought no doubt communicated by one to another, that they "would" come and take "JESUS by force and make Him a King." By using this very word "King" they add the one point necessary to the completion of His character as the Messiah, namely, as Prophet, as Priest, and now as "King."

"When JESUS therefore," says the text, "perceived" this, perceived the thoughts of their hearts, "perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a King," "He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." And why? See what S. Matthew says, "When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain *apart* to *pray*; and when the evening was come, He was there alone." "He departed into a mountain to pray," says S. Mark.

Can we not bring into our mind's eye another view, another scene, another landscape with the same JESUS? Can we not picture to ourselves

another remarkable episode in the life of Him Who was and is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!" Take the miracle of this Midlent week, and place it side by side with the other great miracle of Maundy Thursday night. There is some kind of analogy between these very times: between the two times of the middle of Lent, and yet verging to its end; and Maundy Thursday, the middle of Holy Week, and yet verging to its end likewise. The one was the type, and the other the anti-type. In the one case He feeds the bodies, in the other He feeds the souls of men. In both by a miracle. He multiplies mere bread in the one case; in the other He converts Bread and Wine into His Body and Blood. The first miracle is not perpetuated like the second; the first ended in its immediate effects; the second is repeated whenever the Blessed Sacrament is rightly and duly celebrated!

Let me follow out the circumstances of both these incidents, and notice the remarkable contrast, and yet the remarkable analogy between them. In both cases JESUS retires into a mountain; in both cases it is evening; in both cases He is alone, first with His Disciples, and then apart. But now comes the very beautiful contrast between the two incidents. In both cases they come to take Him, and that to "make Him a King;" in the one case they did it wittingly, and in the other unwittingly. In the one case they did

use, in the other they would have used "force." In the one case they would in all reality, and in all sober earnestness, and literally have made Him a King, in the other they do so in bitter mockery and scorn, crowning Him with a Diadem of Thorns! In the one case He refused, in the other He consented. In the one case He "perceived" their thoughts, and "departed," and went into a mountain to pray, in the other He consents, *yields* to a "force" when He *might* have "departed;" when He might have escaped, when legions of Angels were ready to guard Him, to bear Him up, lest He should dash His foot against a stone; yet in this latter case He consents. He goes up that other Mount. He goes up first to the Mount of Olives and there endures the bitter Agony of the garden of Gethsemane, and then He goes up to His Throne, the Throne of the Cross, He goes up the Mount of Calvary!

And lo, the Royal Title is placed over His head,—"JESUS of Nazareth the King of the Jews!"

But see further, His words on that Throne of the Cross, and yet that Altar of the Cross, are words of prayer! His first word is the prayer of the *Priest* interceding, "FATHER, forgive them;" the second that of the *King* exercising His royal prerogative of mercy to the penitent thief, "LORD, remember me," the thief says, "when Thou comest into Thy kingdom;" and the answer is, "This day *shalt* thou be with Me in Paradise." His other prayers

are those of the Prophet, fulfilling His own Prophecies ; until all is "finished," and types fulfilled, and the same JESUS is there as the "King in His Beauty" though at the same time the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

And yet amidst these great, solemn, deep, mysterious truths of Midlent, and yet of Passion-tide there comes out from both these incidents, mainly this simple, every day lesson, namely that of fleeing praise, and courting mortification.

It sounds one of the hardest and most unreal of all our Christian duties to flee from praise, and to court mortification. It seems to be, and indeed in one sense is, a most unnatural thing to do. We *like* to be praised. We often want only a little pressure of praise, not to say flattery put upon us, to make us consent to what we often know to be doubtful, and sometimes know to be wrong. All kinds of things combine to bring this about. There is our proper pride. There is our ambition. There is our sensitiveness and false shame, in being ashamed to own that we cannot do something or other which we are asked to do, or something that is expected of us ; as for instance when we are led into expenses beyond our means. There is even what we call our laudable emulation. There is again, on the other hand, what we think, the well earned reward of good service done. If we have fed our thousands in never so small a way, we are rarely content to keep the

knowledge of the blessed privilege to ourselves. We rarely require any "force" to reward us for it in the acclamations of public opinion. Nay, we are much more likely to take steps, indirect at least, possibly direct, to let our good deeds be known: or to claim, or even indeed to proclaim our right to reward. In a word, instead of being taken "by force," and being made "a king," we are far too apt to *force ourselves upon the notice of others*.

This may be all natural enough, and from the world's point of view, right enough. But, after all, the real question is, is this like or unlike JESUS? There can be no doubt what the answer will be. All depends upon what standard we follow. All depends upon what, or upon whom we set up as our Model. The very language of the Gospel is a foreign, unreal, exaggerated language to us, if we adopt the language of society and of the world. These people wished as a token of gratitude, or even to put it on higher grounds, as a mark of honour, to make JESUS a king: they wished to do so, because they had a *kind of faith* in Him in recognising Him as a Prophet. Or to put it on lower grounds, they wished to do so because they had been temporarily benefited by Him, therefore they wished, I say, to "take JESUS by force, and to make Him a King."

He perceives their thoughts. He knew what was in man, in all men, and in these men. He

will not even listen to the proposal, even before it found its way into speech. He departs. He leaves them. He flies from the praise, and the flattery, or even the good opinion of men. He goes away "alone." He leaves them to go into the mountain to pray. He leaves these low, worldly, grovelling, earthly desires, and goes upward to the purer air of Heaven, to commune with the FATHER in Prayer.

Now for ourselves! In our measure let us imitate His example, and above all in this particular point. No doubt praise is not equally dangerous to all. But it is dangerous, most dangerous. Sins without number accompany it. Pride, Conceit, Vanity, Self-Complacency, Censoriousness. Nay, in the very avoiding of praise, we may fall into any of these sins. So subtle and dangerous a temptation is it!

Well then, we should ward off praise skilfully, we should interpose the shield of real humility, which first makes us feel that we are utterly undeserving of praise, and next, that others deserve it so much more than we do. Let us feel that the little we have done is after all God's doing, and not ours. God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

Then again, even after warding off praise or flattery, we must take care not to dwell upon it with pleasure afterwards. If we do, we may depend upon it, that however secretly, however

insidiously, we shall find ourselves very soon acting from motives of expediency, and not out of principle, we shall invariably find ourselves adopting the world's standard and not that of the Cross, we shall find ourselves doing good that we may be "seen of men," and have the praise of men.

The next and last point we consider, in conclusion, is a much harder one. It is one which implies a much higher stage in the Christian life. I mean that of courting mortifications. Let us reduce it one step to bring it down to our own level. I think at least we are bound to accept mortifications, if we cannot get to the length of courting them. No doubt this is a matter which belongs more especially to the science of the saints. Yes indeed, it is so! But also this is not only a Lenten Lesson, but a Lesson of every-day life, and for commonplace people! To receive a mortification humbly if not thankfully, is the one thing which brings a whole world of pride into action. In social life of course, taking the world's standard, it means a quarrel, possibly a lifelong feud.

But even in our daily lives, as in the cases of being for instance overlooked, thought little of, found fault with in the presence of others, ridiculed, deliberately annoyed, or it may be insulted, let us ask ourselves, what are we prepared to do? How are we prepared to receive these and many other similar mortifications? Shall we be like or unlike the LORD JESUS CHRIST?

Dear brethren ! I do not speak to you as if this were a mere theory, or a matter for preaching and not for practice ! I tell you, and we all know it from experience, that it is hard, very hard to accept mortifications honestly, humbly, and thankfully ; but I tell you and we all know it to be necessary, most necessary !

It really comes to this, if we would reign with JESUS, it must be by first getting the rule over ourselves. It must be by escaping from mere worldly praise. It must be by mortification, crucifixion of self, and of self-complacency and of self-will. Nay even when those who love us, and may have been benefited by us, would take us "by force," and make much of us, we must use "force" too, a kindly but firm "force," and escape into a higher, healthier region of prayer, and solitude !

Ah, but when they force us to do what is distasteful to us, if only it be for our soul's good, *then* let us be beforehand with them ; let us go to meet them, and ask them, "whom seek ye?" or, as when Abraham laid his hands on his son even for sacrifice, let us say, Behold, my FATHER, here I am ; or far better still, as He who was the anti-type of Isaac of old, our truer Isaac, the Son of Promise, the SON of GOD, the CHRIST, the Prophet, Priest, and King, let us say with Him, "If it be possible, my FATHER, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done!"

SERMON XX.

Passion Sunday.

THE GODHEAD OF JESUS IN HIS PASSION.

S. JOHN VIII. 58, 59.

“JESUS SAID UNTO THEM, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM. THEN TOOK THEY UP STONES TO CAST AT HIM; BUT JESUS HID HIMSELF AND WENT OUT OF THE TEMPLE, GOING THROUGH THE MIDST OF THEM, AND SO PASSED BY.”

PASSION Sunday though it is, there could be no clearer and grander proof than the last words of the Gospel of this day, of the *Divinity*, or rather, (as that is a word which has been made to have a certain ambiguity of meaning,) let me say, of the *Godhead* of JESUS CHRIST. Nay, because it is Passion Sunday there seems to be all the more need to bring out this great central truth of our religion, that though JESUS CHRIST suffered, yet that in all His suffering, as at all times, JESUS CHRIST was God, “equal to the FATHER as touching His Godhead.”

For notice here, in the words of the text, and in this Gospel for Passion Sunday, JESUS CHRIST calls Himself by the name of the Self-existent God. He does not say, "before Abraham was, I existed," or "I was." That would imply that He derived His being as God from some other first cause, but He says, Before Abraham was, "I am."

And that the Jews to whom He was speaking understood Him as claiming to be Almighty God, is very evident; for if we look carefully at this chapter, we shall find throughout it that though our Blessed LORD speaks to these Jews in the plainest words, and denounces them in the strongest terms, and enraged, as it is evident, they were, yet until He called Himself by the name of, and asserted His identity with the great JEHOVAH, they restrained themselves from any open act of violence.

But when He had said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I AM," then, and not until then, they took up stones to cast at Him. That is, by so doing, they were about to inflict the penalty due, to what they considered to be, blasphemy on His part in making Himself "equal with God." Hence they would fain, as it is written in the law, have "stoned Him with stones till He died." They would have stoned Him as Ahab did Naboth of old, who, they said, "did blaspheme God and the King;" or, as they themselves, or their immediate descendants, stoned

S. Stephen. This charge of blasphemy was the one charge the Jews were endeavouring all the way through to fix upon JESUS. It was *the* charge under pretext of which the Blessed LORD was finally condemned, for we read that when the High Priest "rent his clothes," he said, "Ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death!"

But the hour was not yet come. Not one forward step could be taken to hasten events which had all and each one of them been fore-ordered in their very minutest detail. The very same JESUS Who at His apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane, *went forward* to meet His murderers, and said, "Whom seek ye?" now miraculously hides Himself and "went out of the temple." He went, invisibly through their very midst, and "so passed by." "The times and seasons," the FATHER had "put in His *own* power," and not in the power of His enemies. Many things had yet to be fulfilled before the end would come, before the "Son of Man should be delivered into the hands of wicked men to be crucified." And until *all* was "finished," that awful Event could not be precipitated by one moment; the "end was not yet," but by-and-by!

No doubt however on this Passion Sunday the clouds were gathering, the coming storm was casting its shadow before it. But then as afterwards there is a blessed truth, that throughout all the

light was shining. The Godhead of CHRIST was asserting itself. In His very weakness as Man JESUS was showing forth His power as God.

Now, my brethren, it is this very twofold nature of CHRIST in His one Person, which constitutes, and goes to make up the very essence of our belief as Christians. It is really this on the one hand which is at one time the secret, at another the open object of attack of the enemies of Christianity. It is this on the other hand which calls forth all our wonder and awe at the condescension of CHRIST, Who is "God over all blessed for ever." To be born, as He was born, in poverty and humility, to live as He did live, in what we may call the constant repression, and yet in the occasional escape as it were of the manifest tokens of His Godhead; to die, as He did die, in shame and bitter suffering, and yet in His very Apprehension, Passion, and Death, to let it be seen by all who would see it that JESUS CHRIST was God: this is the wonder passing wonders!

Let me very briefly run through some of these details.

First, Prophecy proclaimed the Incarnate SAVIOUR as God; "Emmanuel, God with us." This same prophecy was fulfilled at the Annunciation by the message of the Angel Gabriel. The gifts of the Gentile Kings at the Epiphany proclaimed JESUS CHRIST, the "young Child," as the object of their worship, as God. His miracles, His

gifts of healing, His healing of soul as well as body, His forgiveness of sins proclaimed Him God. His own sacred words asserted and proved His claim. And strange to say, and yet not strange, the deeper the depth to which He condescended in His Humiliation, always there is cropping up, or rather spanning over, and stamping His whole life, that great cardinal truth, the Eternal Godhead of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

The events of the Passion and above all the very Crucifixion itself, are full of this great truth. When His enemies came to seize Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, He goes forward to meet them and He asks "Whom seek ye?" And when they say JESUS of Nazareth; and He answers, I am He: or rather, I am: and when He uses this expression, that is, calls Himself by His Eternal and rightful Name as the Almighty God, they went backward and were struck prostrate to the very ground. And so onward: even when He is nailed to the Cross: nailed there by Love. For God is Love. And His first words are words which are the attribute of God, that is Words of Forgiveness. Even when He is nailed to the Cross: even when He is powerless by His own will, to raise His pierced Hands to bless, He exercises His Divine Prerogative of Mercy, and tells the Penitent thief, "This Day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Even when He dies, He dies not in the weakness of man, whose

faint breath can scarce be heard by those whose heads are bent over him to catch his last words, but when this blessed GOD dies, He dies with a mighty voice, (the "voice of the LORD is a mighty voice") He dies with a *loud* voice, and thus miraculously dying the Eternal SON commends His spirit to the Eternal FATHER, and gives up the Ghost.

Nay it is so even after His death. After Death when that bruised marred Form, hung lifeless, and motionless on the Cross, even then, He being dead, yet spoke, for the Centurion now, even before that inanimate Form confesses, and professes his faith in the Godhead of JESUS CHRIST. "Truly," he says, "this *was* the SON of GOD." Yes, He was GOD on the Cross, as He was GOD in the Cradle: He was always and ever the great Eternal "I am," the self-existent, the all-powerful, all-wise and all-loving GOD!

Yes, but our text suggests a further idea to us. As GOD is not only GOD, but rejoices to call Himself a Hidden GOD, so JESUS CHRIST is a hidden GOD. He is a GOD who hides Himself. "Verily," says Isaiah, "Thou art a GOD who hidest Thyself, O GOD of Israel the SAVIOUR." Just as Nature hides GOD, or rather as GOD is hidden behind the veil of Nature, so is GOD hidden under the Veil of the Passion: GOD the Creator is hidden by nature: GOD the Redeemer hides Himself. And just as nature merely means earth and sky, and

hills and plains, and leaves and trees, and animals and birds, just as all these are things of nought, and insignificant to a careless, mindless observer, but are full of teaching to the Astronomer, or the Geologist, or the Naturalist : so is it with all Holy Scripture ; so is it with the Sacred Life ; so is it with the Cross and Passion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, GOD and Man. To many alas, to too many, all is a mere blank, or a kind of fable, or an interesting drama, or a picture, or a collection of moral ideas. Either we do not look at all, or we merely look and wonder and pass on. When we fail, for the most part it is because we do not look *into*, we do not search and seek, and strain to take in as much as we may, of this stupendous mystery of a suffering God, and what He suffered, and why He suffered. Yes ! He needs searching out. "Seek ye the LORD. Seek ye My face. Thy Face, LORD, will I seek."

We are approaching, my brethren, the end of Lent. With next week it closes. The Cross will be upreared before us. We are soldiers of that Cross. That Cross is the Banner raised over us. And that Banner is Love. We cannot realise the Cross, without realising Him, who died thereon. And we cannot realise Him, unless we realise that He Who died there, was perfect God, and Perfect Man, in the one Person of CHRIST.

Let us try as far as may be to carry this thought

of JESUS CHRIST as GOD-Man, in scorn and humiliation, and suffering ; let us carry that thought with us in our devotions, our meditations, nay our daily life, above all in the Sacred Passiontide. It will amply repay us. The mystery of Godliness will be forced home into our hearts, into our inmost souls. If we wish in the faintest degree to appreciate the beauty and loveliness of religion, we must needs do so. If we wish to know what our personal interest is, in the Love of CHRIST in His Life and Passion, we must needs do so.

This and this only, not only gives truth but it gives force, reality, earnestness, to all our religious acts, and indeed to our home lives. It need not show much on the surface. Indeed it ought not. But still it *will* show unmistakeably in our lives. It *will* show itself in the restraint of our words, and in the recollectedness of our actions, we shall feel it in the guard over our very thoughts. It will on the one hand check any tendency to emotionalism, or mere temporary religious excitement, or so-called religious enthusiasm.

But on the other, this thought of the Godhead will give warmth ; it will give a true and genuine fervour to our religion, and perseverance in well-doing. It will help us on, and carry us through, in spite of all annoyances or hindrances, or coldness, or deadness, or persecutions whether from the outside or the inside. It will deepen the sense

of sin. "O no!" we shall say, "that is no mere Man suffering for me! It is my SAVIOUR. It is my GOD. How shall I, how can I on the one hand withhold all the wealth and warmth of my love from Him? But how shall I on the other hand, intrude as it were upon His Sacred Sorrows, by mere excited feelings and unreality? or far worse, how dare I pass Him by, pass by my GOD, as if all His sufferings, His Cross, His Passion were nothing to me: as if I had no share in His Love: as if He were not bearing my sins, even as much, nay with more pain than the sins of those who love Him most."

Some such thoughts as these I would fain hope would be helpful to all of us in this Passiontide. GOD through His Church has asked forty days of us. Some of us no doubt have found this hard to give. Out of forty there are but fourteen left. Could we not take the first seven of this fourteen, to prepare us for the last seven; that is for the Sacred Seven of the Holy Week, until they culminate in the Death Day, of our Loving GOD, and that dread awful day comes, and then His Day of Rest in the grave, His body in the Tomb, His Soul in Paradise, His Godhead with both.

And so preparing, so keeping in mind in the Passion, that solemn, blessed truth, and the consequences to which it must inevitably lead us, we shall attain to real earnest, deep, humble sorrow

for sin, and love for God, we shall remember that though as God He could not suffer, yet as God-Man He did, and this for us, and for each one of us. We shall indeed be ready for our Blessed Easter Communion on Easter Day, on that Day when the same JESUS, God and Man, burst the bands of death, (for as the Apostle says "it was not possible He should be holden of it." See! He has conquered Hell, and by His own Power as God He has risen again from the dead, and by virtue of His rising, not only raised us, but made also "partakers of" His own "Divine nature"—Blessed be JESUS CHRIST for this most inestimable Gift and Grace!

SERMON XXI.

Holy Week.

JESUS REVILED.

1 S. PET. II. 23.

“HE WAS REVILED.”

REVILED! what do we mean by the word? To revile, what is it? Let us see. It may mean first to account of, and then to speak of a thing, or a person as *vile* or common. It may mean to speak of a thing or of a person so as to bring it or him into disrepute or contempt. Here however we may put the question of *things* aside altogether, for our text speaks of a Person, “*He* was reviled!”

Now there are of course many, many ways of trying to bring a person into contempt. And there may be many, many motives which prompt us to do so. For instance, we may speak slightly of a person’s parentage, or of his occupation in life, or of his attainments, or of his moral, or

of his mental qualities, or of his religion. We may say, or we may hear people saying of such and such a man, "he is quite a common person; he is *only* a tradesman; he is *only* a servant; he is *only* a poor man." Or again we may carry this a step further back, and we may hear people speak of a man as being of "quite common extraction," of "quite poor parents," &c. Or, once more, we may hear people speak disparagingly even of the part of the country from which a man happens to come, and say that people from that particular part of the country are proverbially "foolish" or "dishonest," and so on. Then again we may hear people speak contemptuously of a man's religion, especially if that religion, however possibly erroneous, teaches them some truths which they never knew, or have forgotten, or do not care to know; or do know and dislike. We may charge a man with being on the one hand overstrict, or on the other overlax in his views of religion, and ridicule him for it.

But we may of course go even further than this.

Contempt and hatred are very closely allied. People often affect to separate the two. Whenever you hear one person make use of that unfortunately too common expression and say of another, "he is beneath contempt," it is a bad sign, a very bad sign! Believe me that in nine cases out of ten, there is a bitter revengeful

heart behind those words. And strangely enough you will find that contempt is often expressed at some particular quality in another person of which the person who expresses his contempt knows himself to be, or at any rate is, deficient.

But oftener still, to revile—and really this is the ordinary meaning of the word, means openly, and without measure to use coarse, injurious, contemptuous, revengeful, bitter words, and gestures to another. It is the frame of mind when a person loses all control over himself. The reviling tongue is unloosed, and is “set on fire of Hell,” as S. James says. Silence only provokes it to greater excesses: and charges, which, a moment’s thought would show us are absurd, are made, and repeated, and persisted in, and insisted upon, and all because we are completely carried away with our feelings, or our passions, our jealousy, our anger, or our prejudices. We have in a word, drifted from the safe moorings of charity and are simply at the mercy of the wild waves of our passions. God help us if we ever begin to speak evil of others. Who shall say where it will end? O that golden rule of keeping silence even often, it may be, from good words! from how many a sin of the tongue it could save us, how many a grace it would gain us. Silence! “Silence, even from good words,” for there are times when even our “good words” are fuel to the flames of evil passions.

Nay but the text speaks not only generally of a person being "reviled," but it speaks of One particular person who was. Who was this? I need not tell you. You know. And you know also in a slight degree, from what I have said what this word to "revile," means.

But you do not know, nor do I, and no word of mine, or anybody else's could tell what this dreadful word could *fully* mean, when applied to Him of Whom the text speaks. Alas! those words refer to our Blessed LORD and SAVIOUR, our GOD and our Redeemer, JESUS CHRIST.

Reviled! Yes, "He was reviled!" My dearest brethren, you may remember two passages of Holy Scripture, which tell you of this. You may remember how it is written of that dread, solemn, awful time of the Crucifixion, that they who "passed by" His Cross on the first Good Friday, "reviled Him, wagging their heads," and saying, "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the SON of GOD, come down from the Cross."

You may remember, also, that other passage which tells us how that even, "they that were crucified with Him, even those two thieves reviled Him," both "reviled Him" at first, the one blaspheming Him, the other "heaping reproaches" upon Him (as the words in the original might be taken to mean.) O what a time, what a place, by what persons to be "reviled." We know, we

remember all this. We have heard of it in Sermons, we have read it, or had it read to us in the Gospels. We know that one of the chiefest of the indignities offered to the Blessed One, and above all at the time of His Crucifixion was, that "He was reviled."

But did we ever think much, or rather did we ever in a faint degree attempt to realise the torrent of blasphemies, oaths, curses, obscene remarks, taunts, jeering, mocking, gestures of scorn, contempt, ridicule, or bitter, fierce, burning hatred, poured out upon Him like a filthy torrent, as He was dragged on that terrible morning of Good Friday, all the way from the Garden of Gethsemane to the House of Annas, from the House of Annas to the House of Caiaphas, from the House of Caiaphas to the Hall of Pilate, from the Hall of Pilate to the Court of Herod, and then back again from the Court of Herod to the Hall of Pilate, and so from the Hall of Pilate to Calvary. To Calvary, and then on the Cross! All the way along, and above all when He reached His resting place (O what a resting place) above all *then* "He was reviled."

Alas! this is no story, dearest brethren, which may be true, or untrue. It is no fiction, just to work upon the imagination. These are sad, sober, and yet terrible Gospel truths, and Gospel facts. Think for one moment how any modest woman, or even man, among you would

shrink from any bad word ; and then think what perfect Purity must have felt, as it hung in the Person of CHRIST, on that sacred, awful, blessed Cross, exposed to the screams and yells, the blasphemies and revilings of that excited, blood-thirsty, heartless multitude, or rather mob. Think for one moment how any religious mind among you would be shocked by hearing an oath, or worse still a blasphemy, and then think of the Author of all Religion, assailed by torrents of those terrible blasphemies, of which of course but some few are recorded.

But worse than all this, think once more of that last sad scene. Picture to yourselves the LORD dying : the SAVIOUR Crucified : GOD Incarnate offering Himself a willing sacrifice. On His part no murmurs, no complaints, no longing for pity, no word of reproach, no assertion of His power. And all the while, and above all then, as if even His very silence called forth their shouts, both the tongues of the crowd below, nay the tongues of those by His side, when He so lovingly, patiently suffers, even to death, even then they are *reviling* Him.

We do not realise enough yet. To understand in a measure what JESUS suffered for us, we must never forget that even His Crucifixion was only one part, greatest part indeed, but still only one part of His action in our Redemption ; it was but an act, chiefest indeed, but still one act of a whole

drama. To single out only one detail of His Life, and to take it as the whole, is to do Him, and therefore all Christianity, injustice. It is to miss the point of a *whole life* given for our lives, a whole life and not a part of it! A whole *life* and not a death only.

The Crucifixion may be indeed and probably was, if we may so say, the concentration and in one sense, very remarkably, an epitome of this whole life. You may, for instance, take any one of the chief circumstances of the Crucifixion, and you will generally find that it is a reproduction, an intensified reproduction it may be, of some or even many similar circumstances in the past life of JESUS! In other words this is the same thing as to say that His whole life on earth was a suffering life. So with the Reviling: think of all these words of unkindness, the harsh words, the injurious, contemptuous words, the hateful, angry, revengeful words poured upon Him. Such words are hard to bear at all times, but of course, and of necessity, they seem to be hardest, and most unfeeling of all, when we are sick, or suffering, and far more so if we were dying. But still we do feel them acutely enough at all times. And so this particular thread of the suffering, of being "reviled," ran all through, not only of course the Crucifixion, but the whole Life of JESUS.

Yes, there is scarcely a way we can think of in which He was not "reviled!" They reproached

Him with His parentage. "Is not this," they say, "the carpenter's son?" They call Him "a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They accuse Him of neglecting the duties of religion. One of their favourite charges is that He was a Sabbath-breaker. They tell Him that He is a Heretic and a Schismatic in matters of religion, calling Him a Samaritan. They charge Him with performing His miracles, by the aid of the chief of the evil spirits. Nay, they say that even He Himself is "possessed" by and has a "devil." They tell Him that He is mad, and even His friends say He is "beside Himself." They ridicule Him even for the place of His birth, and bringing up, and call Him a "Nazarene," proverbially a place from which according to Nathanael, "no good thing" could "come." They accuse Him of being a traitor to His country and a rebel, "calling Himself, CHRIST a King." Until at length, misunderstood by nearly all, misrepresented by others, suspected, feared, hated, ridiculed, we come to that last sad scene of which I just now spoke; this Reviling in death of the Son of God—God the SON reviled by sinners while dying for them!

What the details of that scene are I leave you to imagine. All had a part in that Reviling. Pilate practically admits the charge made against Him; and those that led Him, or rather dragged Him to Pilate, charge Him with being a male-

factor. Herod and his men of war set Him at naught. The rulers also with the people "derided Him." Pilate's soldiers also "mocked Him." They "bowed the knee," or genuflected before Him in mockery. (And this is why we do it in Adoration, and as an act of Reparation, when He is Present in the Blessed Sacrament.) They express their scorn and hatred by every reviling gesture as well as by word. What would you have more to show you how "He was reviled?" And even now this is but the thousandth part of the reviling He underwent. Simply we can but guess, we know not of all His sufferings. That touching petition of a Greek Litany applies to this as well as to all portions of our Blessed LORD's sufferings: "By Thine *unknown* sufferings, good LORD, deliver us." "Unknown," because not only unwritten or unseen even by those who were nearest to Him, but unknown because beyond the mind or heart of man to realise, considering the person of the Sufferer. O who could tell the depth of that suffering? Can it be measured? No and yes. No—it cannot, because it is boundless, and deep, and unfathomable. Yes it can, but only by the depth of His Love. Still the one, like the other, is immeasurable; it is incomprehensible; it is beyond the grasp of finite human reason, because it is a God who suffers. One word of His might have silenced the mouths of the Revilers and that for ever. If an Apostle

could silence two liars by striking them dead, what could not have the Master done to these revilers? But love for us and even for them, these very revilers, left that word unsaid. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again: when He suffered, He threatened not."

But let us briefly see in conclusion, what the verse preceding our text says. It has its lesson for us, each one of us. "Even hereunto were *ye* called," it says, "because CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving us an *example* that *ye* should follow *His steps*."

Alas! my brethren, for us Christians, how often we fail in this respect, how different we are from those Disciples of JESUS whose heart burned within them when He was with them. Their faith it may be was unformed. They knew then less about their religion probably than many of us do. But still their "heart burned" with love. Alas, my brethren, for us Christians, our heart-burnings so often arise from a very different cause. How easily we are provoked when we are spoken ill of, or "reviled," or how quick we are to defend ourselves: how often we treasure up angry feelings in our hearts: or how ready we are even to "revile" again. O what a help to us if we could but remember that it is a "soft," and not ■ harsh, "answer that turneth away wrath."

But better still if we could, instead of fighting our own battles, and giving back as good, or

rather ■■ bad as we get, as we call it, how much better if we could instead of this, let that proof-shield of the passion of CHRIST be interposed, and ward off the blow, when we are "reviled." True it is, too true that there are tongues that speak "like the piercings of ■ sword;" that there are people who seem to have a special gift for saying sharp and cutting things; that there are others who by their coarse rudeness go very nearly, if not quite to the point of reviling us. Be it so! Shall He who did no sin, shall He in whose mouth was found no guile, bear all and endure all the revilings of ■ whole life, and those of His Passion without ever once even thinking of reviling again; and shall we revile? Surely not.

Nay, rather let us take it as a grace, and a gift of God, when we are ridiculed, or meet with contempt, or are reviled, or abused, or persecuted. If it only be for CHRIST's sake. And if it be for His sake, then it is, and we should take it as a blessing indeed, for we then most surely share in His sufferings, and in His Passion. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven."

But let us remember that we not only ought to be passive, and simply suffer persecution, but more than this we must, we are bound to return

good for evil, and blessings for threatenings, we must heap the "coals of the fire" of love on the heads of our enemies, if we have them, so that we may kindle love instead of hatred. Like S. Paul "being reviled," we "must bless," being "persecuted," we must "suffer it," being "defamed," we must "entreat."

If we could but realise it, it is a positive, absolute, certain gain to us to be "reviled," but then it is only a gain if we revile not again. No doubt it is hard work. But what is bearing a Cross, but hard work? And what is being a Christian at all, but hard work? If we want to make it easy work, then instead of asking Jesus to take us up to His Cross, we in point of fact with them who reviled Him, ask Him to come down from It to us. In other words, we ourselves revile Him, for this very request was exactly the taunt, and railing of His enemies, "If Thou be the Son of God," they said, "come down from the Cross."

Let me conclude in the touching words of S. Chrysostom. "Considering then," he says, "all these things, control thyself. For what sufferest thou like thy LORD suffered? Wast thou publicly insulted? But not like these things. Art thou mocked? Yet not thy whole body, not being thus scourged and stripped. And even if thou wast buffeted, yet not like this. And add to this I pray thee, by whom, and wherefore, and when,

and who it was ; and (the most grievous matter !) that these things being done, no one found fault, no one blamed what was done, but on the contrary all rather approved, and joined in mocking Him and in jeering at Him, both as a boaster, an impostor, a deceiver, and as one not able to prove in His works the things that He said. So did they ‘revile’ Him !

“But He held His peace to all, preparing for us the most powerful incentives to long-suffering, to patience, and gentleness, that should we be Reviled we Revile not again !”

SERMON XXII.

Holy Week.

JESUS WEARIED.

S. JOHN IV. 6.

“JESUS BEING WEARIED.”

IF we could all but grasp and realise that great central truth of Christianity, that the Incarnation, or being made Man, of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, is the taking up of our human nature into a different and higher sphere; and if we could but remember that *every* Christian, that is *all* the baptized, and each one of them since the Incarnation, virtually and really bears a different relationship to God, because God has taken part in our human nature in becoming Man, in being “made Man:” if we could, I say, but realise this great truth, it would open out to us ■ marvellous field upon which we could exercise our faith and our love.

Let me try to put it to you as clearly ■ I can, and as simply ■ I can. When man fell in our

first parents, the justice of God had to be satisfied. A ransom had to be offered, not only for the sins of the whole world, not only for the sin of each man, but for each sin of each soul of man. Suffering was to be undergone of one kind or another, nay, of every kind, and at last blood had to be shed. So it was, that CHRIST suffered and died. A victim well pleasing to God was needed. It must therefore be a sinless victim. It could not be a mere man, for he could not be sinless. It could not be a God, for God could not suffer. Might it not be an Angel? No, for like must be cured with like, that is, man sinned, and man must suffer. Human nature fell away from God, human nature must bear the penalty, and then human nature must be restored by human nature allied to God. But Angels have not the nature of man, so that though one of them could to a certain extent have fulfilled the condition of a victim, as far as sinlessness was concerned, yet not being man, not being human, not being partakers of our human nature, no Angel, even if he could have suffered, would have satisfied the justice of God, by becoming a satisfaction for the sin of man.

This is why it is written of our LORD JESUS CHRIST that "He took *not* on Him the nature of Angels, but the nature of man," being "made a little lower than the Angels," and this it is said expressly "for the suffering of death." And not

only so, but "that He by the grace of God should taste of death for *every man*."

On the other hand we find this difficulty. We know that though CHRIST died for, and tasted death for every man, yet every man will not be saved. CHRIST died for all, and yet all will not be saved. CHRIST died for each man, and yet each man will not be saved. Could then the death of the Son of God be of no avail, could it be, in fact, inoperative in any case? There is a seeming contradiction. Now here is a short and simple solution of the difficulty. We must always bear in mind that in order to become partakers of His holiness, we must be made partakers of His sufferings.

Then again we must remember another very awful, very solemn, very blessed truth. It is this, namely, that, bearing as our Blessed LORD did the sins of the whole world, and each sin of each man, it follows of necessity that every single suffering He underwent, was the bearing of some corresponding sin or sins on the part of man. For instance, the sin you or I committed this very day, as well as those we committed years ago, nay, those into which we may even fall to-morrow, or at any future period of our lives, each one sin was borne, and had its very counterpart in the Sufferings of the Life, or of the Passion of JESUS our LORD. He not only, that is, bore them in the aggregate, but each one even in detail. So that it would be quite true of each one of us to say for

himself, "not only each sin of mine was included in the Redemption my LORD wrought for me, but also *each* sin of mine *added* to my LORD's sufferings; *each* sin of mine added to the bitterness of His Passion." It will not do to say, that our Blessed LORD being man, and living as a man, could not be otherwise than subject to the ills to which man's flesh is heir. He was indeed subject to them, but in a very different way, He was not *heir* to them. He did not inherit them as we do. We have suffering, and we deserve it. He had suffering, and He did not deserve it.

Was not this then, it may be asked, unjust to Him? No; because He bore it out of love for us, bore it freely and willingly in our stead, bore it for the salvation of our souls. And this is true of *all* His sufferings. Not to touch upon more than that suffering we spoke of last night, the suffering it must have been (if we realise the Person of JESUS CHRIST our LORD) to be "reviled," abused, blasphemed, taunted, jeered, mocked at. Yes, but why? Why only that He should bear all the revilings, the abuses, the blasphemies, the oaths, the sneers at religion, the falsehoods that ever have been, or ever will be uttered by any one man, by any one of us; to bear them all JESUS was reviled.

But to-night we have to think of another point,—"JESUS wearied." Let me try to analyse this word as I did the other expression last night.

Now what is it to be *wearied*? It is a very expressive word, although at first sight it seems a very commonplace one. We all know in one way or another what it is to be "wearied." Generally speaking it implies no bodily pain, nothing much more perhaps than being fatigued or tired. Of course however we may be wearied and fatigued up to the very point of being quite and even dangerously exhausted. But that is mere bodily weakness. Let us get deeper into the meaning of the word. Supposing, for instance, that our hearts had been set, or fixed on any particular object; supposing further that this object was the one all-engrossing object of our life, that we watched day and night for it, that we spent all our energies upon it, that nothing else ever filled our mind. If this were so we should often and often be labouring for that object, both with mind and body, not only with all, but often, if not always, beyond our strength.

Now, there was a work upon which JESUS had set His heart. The work of JESUS was the work of the salvation of our souls. Work was the very essence of the scheme by which man was saved, by which mankind was redeemed. So it was that JESUS our LORD was "ever going about doing good and healing those that were oppressed of the devil." So it was that He counteracted and baffled the wiles, the stratagems, or the open attacks of the enemy of souls. There were His

long nights spent in prayer. There were His long journeys. There were His unceasing preaching, teaching, and instructing. He had no leisure, "not so much as to eat!" The very ties of home are set aside; the very love He had for His parents is set aside for His Heavenly FATHER's business. "Wist ye not," He says, know ye not, (when His Mother sought Him sorrowing) "that I must be about," it is necessary that I should be, ever about, always about, "My FATHER's business."

Such a work like that could not be without its incessant weariness; it could not be without often its sheer sense of bodily fatigue, often amounting it may be, to utter prostration!

But, O the weariness of mind! Think of Him; realise His Person and His work. Think of the work of JESUS, and how often it seemed so utterly wasted, and frustrated; and then at once will come into your mind, some at least of His many trials of Weariness of Mind. Remember He had a true human Soul, a true human Mind, as well as a true human body. He was God indeed all the while, but He was also Man, perfect Man. So think of the Weariness of Mind, never of course approaching to impatience, which He must have often felt in the incessant traps which were laid to catch Him in His talk; the Weariness of unrequited love: the cold, heartless way in which nearly all treated Him. Think of the weariness of His disappointment in many who came so near, but

still fell short after all in embracing the Gospel : as for instance, in the case of a young man who had large possessions, the man upon whom JESUS had looked, and whom, (it is expressly written) JESUS loved : think of such a man as this, I say, coming so near to the Kingdom of God and then falling away !

Then also there was the weariness of meeting with so many who to the last would persist in misunderstanding Him, who would persist in misunderstanding the nature of His Person, and of His office ; there was the weariness, if one may so speak, at the stupidity of some who had been long with Him, of His own Disciples, such as S. Philip ; there was the weariness at the obstinacy of those, whom He had no other purpose than to win—only they would not be won—there was the weariness in the long forbearance with, and as it were, fruitless endeavours to win even the thief and traitor Judas.

Well then, all this weariness of both mind and body must have given the dear LORD such pain and sorrow as we cannot conceive. Borne, of course it was, without a murmur. But it, no doubt, was one of His great sufferings. And like all His other sufferings it was borne for our sakes. It was borne that we should unite our sufferings of the same kind to His.

But it was borne also by our means. We were instrumental in laying this heavy load upon Him.

In other words, as I said before, each sin of each soul of ours, was there in the life and upon the Cross of JESUS. It could not be otherwise. Any sin of ours which was not there, was not atoned for. Hence it would follow, if it were so, that the atonement of the Lamb of God would be incomplete and imperfect. Therefore, again, it follows,—and you will see at once what a different colour and aspect it gives to our sins,—it follows that each act of sloth or indolence, or idleness on our part both added to the sufferings and yet was compensated by the work of JESUS.

It is not easy to take this idea in, but it is quite necessary. Even if it does no more it may teach us what a terrible thing even such a sin, so lightly spoken of as sloth, or indolence, or laziness is. Either our Blessed LORD is, or He is not, our Example: either we are bound or we are not bound to follow His footsteps. If He is our Example, and if we are bound to follow in His steps, how comes there to be in us, not so great a likeness, but so great a contrast, between *our* lives, and the life of our LORD, our Example? Alas for us, we not only often feel weary of any good work, of any spiritual work, but, worse still, we rarely even work enough to feel weary! When Lent, and this Holy Week come to an end, what are we going to do? How many of us will be weary of church-going, and think we have had enough of it? Enough to last us until another Lent comes round!

And yet we know that our Example was daily in the Temple. We are slothful about and hurry our private prayers, morning and evening. And yet our Example spent long nights in prayer to God. We are unearnest and distracted in our Prayers, and yet He prayed until the great Blood drops forced themselves through His brow. We so soon weary of trying to do good: we give up people as hopeless: we are annoyed at their obstinacy, or their prejudices, or their stupidity, or even their insincerity. No doubt all these defects, all these are trying to us. It is quite natural that we should be discouraged, and wearied at them. But wearied as we may be, we should neither murmur, nor be annoyed, nor give them up. No doubt the LORD Himself, as we are, was often wearied both in body and mind, with those with whom He had to deal. But "having loved His own, He *loved* them unto *the end*."

Yes! it is the power of *love*, which triumphs over all weariness. We know it to a slight degree when we watch by the bed-side of those whom we love when they are sick, above all if they are dying. We may be, and are often wearied, but we watch on, because we *love*. Let us carry that principle out in our work of whatever kind it may be. Let us remember that to weary in our work is to weary in the love of the LORD JESUS: it is to weary even of His sufferings: it is to weary of His Cross: it is to add to His sufferings; it is to add to His weariness.

O no, my dearest brethren ; let it be for us not to “weary in well doing :” let us never faint for the sake of a little fatigue or discomfort for CHRIST’s sake !

People of the world do a great deal more for the world’s sake. They are up early and “late take rest” for worldly business. The children of the world are wiser and more active in their way, than the children of light. They turn night into day for pleasure. How many of us do anything like that for the love of CHRIST, and in order to do some work for Him !

SERMON XXIII.

Holy Week.

JESUS IN SOLITUDE.

S. JOHN XVI. 32.

“BEHOLD, THE HOUR COMETH, YEA, IS NOW COME, THAT YE SHALL BE SCATTERED EVERY MAN TO HIS OWN, AND SHALL LEAVE ME ALONE: AND YET I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE THE FATHER IS WITH ME.”

THERE is a suffering and a sorrow which some of us may have already felt in greater or less degree, or which some of us may be feeling now, but one which *all* of us, or at the least so nearly all of us, that we may fairly call it, all, must feel sooner or later. It is a suffering which we cannot feel fully in anticipation, or even by meditation upon it.

We must have *experienced* this suffering of which I speak in order to realise it to any extent. We may picture it to ourselves. We may see the intense grief it causes in others. We may gain much knowledge of it, by much knowledge of human nature. The Priest probably will know

something of it in various ways. We may endeavour to soothe it, or to alleviate it in others, but often there will be a lurking feeling in our minds of perplexity at the inability on our parts to understand or appreciate it, much less to soothe it. Now much of this is only because we either have not experienced it at all, or experienced it in a comparatively partial or slight degree.

This suffering and sorrow then is not one always, or necessarily arising from pain of body, or sickness, often indeed it is accompanied, aggravated, if I may so say, or made heavier by them : but the suffering and sorrow I mean is one rather of the mind, and of the soul, and of the spirit, than of the body. It is that of loneliness !

The word itself does not carry any very definite meaning to most of us. We have not perhaps experienced it, and therefore it does not sound much to most of us. To be alone sometimes seems to be, and often is to many a decided advantage, a decided relief, almost a luxury. To escape from the noise and hurry of the world : for a time to be free from the very society of those we love, our families, our children, our friends, our intimate companions, may be even a pleasant change. There is a certain amount of luxury, as I said just now, in being alone. The greater luxury, because the higher we go up in the social scale, the less chance is there of its being indulged in.

But to be alone, and to be lonely, may be two widely different things. To be *alone* we must have no one in our company, no one with us; but to be *lonely* we need not be absolutely by ourselves. We may be very *lonely* in the midst of a crowd. We may be very *lonely* even in the midst of our families. Our pursuits, our tone of mind, our habits of thought may practically cut us almost entirely off from those with whom we are by force of circumstances, or rather by the ordering of God's Providence bound to live, and amongst whom, not improbably, we may have to live to the day of our death.

Let us see what this amounts to. Say for instance, that our mind is full of some one given subject. Say that we shape our whole lives upon it. Say that we do violence to ourselves, that we are never so prudent, never so wise as not to obtrude the one leading thought of our life upon others, nevertheless that we are always on the watch to take advantage of any opportunity so to do. But say, that we find, we *know*, that that *one* thing which is dearer to us than life itself is, and must be, a subject of indifference, or of ridicule, that it is distasteful, and even hateful to those among whom we live. Then are we *lonely*. We are thrown back upon ourselves. We are tempted to become reserved and morbid; we are tempted to relax; we are tempted to think, that we *may* be mistaken in this *one* great object of our lives. Con-

science tells us all the time that we are not. We are tempted to think that we should like to make our hard stones into bread, to exchange the weariness of the wilderness for the kingdom of the world. We are tempted to feel that we cannot see *why* we are left *alone* to fight our battles with every man's hand against us.

Then we go further. We are tempted to compare our lot with that of others. We are tempted to complain of want of sympathy or of opposition, to complain, not as David, *to* God, but even *of* God. All, and many more of these temptations spring from loneliness and isolation.

Well then, that very temptation, in each of its varied forms, was met, and overcome by JESUS our LORD in His Life, and in His Passion—God be praised !

Let this then be the subject of our meditation to-day. JESUS in solitude, or JESUS alone, or JESUS lonely.

If loneliness in any sense of the word is a sorrow or a suffering, then JESUS must needs have suffered it. It was a suffering and a *sorrow* which He bore, and bore to relieve ours. "For He hath borne" *all* "our griefs and carried" *all* "our sorrows." Or again, if ever the sense of loneliness has led, or tends to lead us to murmur, or to distrust God, then it was amongst the *sins* which JESUS bore, "His own self bare our *sins* on the Tree," that is, on the Tree of the Cross. But not

only was our murmuring at loneliness amongst the sins which He bore, but it was also amongst the sufferings and the sorrows which we added to the Cross and Passion of JESUS. If the knowledge that we are liable to temptation from the sense of *loneliness*, whether it come from the fact of our being friendless, or forsaken, or obliged to live alone; or whether it come from the fact that we are obliged to live amongst what we may call uncongenial minds, either way, or any way, all, I repeat, has been included in the Life, in the Cross, and in the Passion of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Now there are two kinds of religious life led in the Church of God. There are some people who give themselves entirely up to a solitary life, so far as entire separation and seclusion from the world is concerned. Their life is almost exclusively a life of prayer and meditation, or contemplation. They think a great deal about CHRIST, and they pray a great deal; they live alone and apart from their fellow Christians, they are shut out from the world. And even in those places where they live, much of their time is spent absolutely *alone*. Is this loneliness? It may be in one sense, it is not in another. The common idea is to run down this kind of life. The world thinks it a waste of time to be always praying. The world thinks a good deal of work. The world may be right as it goes, but it depends upon what is meant by the word work. Moses

worked as hard when he had his hands uplifted to pray, as the Israelites in fighting below. Nay, without *his* work, *theirs* would have failed. But the world thinks otherwise. The world looks for results; large congregations, large offertories, popular clergymen, popular everybody. Everything going is to go smoothly. And so the world, and worldly Church people are apt to look down upon what is called a contemplative life, a life which on the surface does not seem to be useful to the world, to the state, to society, and so on; the world does not understand a life given up to seclusion and prayer.

But really and truly it is the censorious, fault-finding, utilitarian spirit of the age which has biassed so many minds with this worldly feeling. We must never forget that *every estate* of life is sanctioned in Holy Scripture. Every estate of life has its sanctifying principle in the example of our Blessed LORD. In the net of the Kingdom of God, there is room for all states and all conditions. The point simply is, to what state of life has God called us. What is our vocation? Married, it is well; unmarried, it is better; to work, it is well; to pray it is better. Active it is well: contemplative perhaps better. To live surrounded by the blessings of a household, it is well, so only that children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD; to live without them for CHRIST's sake, it is better. But

whatever our state of life may be, whatever our vocation may be, whether it be a lonely one, alone, or one in the midst of the world, we must try to do the duties of that station, and that without repining or complaining.

Now although yesterday we had to consider the weariness of JESUS our LORD arising from His *active* life, His life of unwearied work, yet there is quite room enough for us to think of Him to-day in His life of *loneliness*, whether we take that loneliness to be as when He was actually and literally alone, or His loneliness when mixing with those around Him.

Now much of His life of loneliness, must have been a contemplative life. People of the world in their headlong, unreasonable mode of thinking, are very apt, simply by way of argument or rather through prejudice, to claim our LORD's example as ■ strong proof of the superiority of the active life. Be it so. Let them claim. But they could not have thought much about the other side of the question. Let us remember that at least eighteen years of our LORD's life was spent, without our having any active positive work whatever recorded. From the time He was twelve years of age to the time He "began to be about" thirty, there is no record whatever of what He was doing. We could not think of course that He was idle, but He certainly was not at work in the sight of the world.

Surely, He was, as it were, training by prayer, and solitude, that is by a contemplative life, for His active ministerial life which only lasted three years ! Nevertheless we must not forget the proportions. To put it at the lowest estimate we cannot but see that His secluded, solitary, contemplative life, was just six times as long as His active ministerial life !

But let us pass by this controverted subject, and think again of the loneliness, of the solitude of our Blessed LORD JESUS. He was "alone" and yet "not alone." They are very nearly His own words. He was alone in the wilderness and yet not alone, for with Him, tempting Him, was the enemy of souls. He was alone, as He walked on the sea, in such majestic awful solitary grandeur, in such solemn stillness, to go to His Disciples in the ship when the wind was contrary and the ship tossed with the waves. He was alone on many a dreary night on the hill side, many a night spent in Prayer, and yet not alone, for the ear of GOD is close to the mouth of Him who prays. He was alone in that Hour of which He spoke, of which our text speaks, on the eve of His Passion. "Behold," He says, "the Hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the FATHER is with Me." He was alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, where "He was withdrawn from His

Disciples, as it were, about a stone's cast." He was alone especially when in that withdrawal was perhaps typified, and by it was included our own lonely sorrows, when the "heart knoweth his own bitterness." He was alone on the Cross, though surrounded by jeering, mocking words: He was alone above all times, beyond the being alone in the wilderness, beyond perhaps being alone in the garden, now as His three hours' agony drew to close, He was more alone than ever, for now even the Face of the FATHER was withdrawn, from the Face of the LORD'S Anointed, and about the ninth hour—close that is upon three o'clock, on that awful first Good Friday afternoon, "JESUS cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," that is to say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." Why hast Thou left Me alone?

O if we could but realise what *that* sense of loneliness, *that* forsaking was! If we could but realise it once, and that in the faintest degree; if we could but realise, and take in, and take home to ourselves, that utter sense of loneliness, that utter sense of desolation or even of desertion, which fell on the Sacred Heart of JESUS when He was left desolate and forsaken! Not only now forsaken by His beloved people for whom He was about to die, not only forsaken now by His beloved and trusted Disciples and Apostles, but now by His FATHER, His GOD! The Face of the FATHER is hidden from the face

of the only Begotten, well-beloved Son. If we could, I say, but only realise this, it would if it did not make our hearts break, on the one hand, with love, yet it would, on the other, with sorrow and contrition. Love; because that suffering, that bitter suffering, was undergone that we should unite now whenever it comes to us, or at the hour of our sickness and death, *our* sense of loneliness, our sense of desolation, *our* sense of bereavement with His sorrow. And contrition; because *our* murmuring, *our* discontent, *our* distrust, were really the causes of the very extremity of suffering to which our Blessed LORD was reduced, and which He endured !

But, blessed and praised be GOD, blessed and praised be the LORD CHRIST, He was forsaken, that we should not be forsaken. He lacked all, that we should lack nothing : "The LORD is my Shepherd," yea, even that Shepherd Who first went before, and then laid down His life for the sheep : "The LORD is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing." Yes ! He is that Shepherd who like David went forth "alone" to fight against and overcome our Goliath. Yea, it was He of Whom is written, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone*, and of the people there was none with Me."

O Blessed JESUS ! He was "alone" for us, for our sakes, and for our salvation : alone, to help us in our loneliness, to condole with us in our be-

reavements, to cheer us under that painful feeling of standing alone in our own circle, even it may be in our families : alone, to teach us not to be dismayed, but to be of good courage ; to make us feel that even if He seem to withdraw from us for a while it is only to make us ask Him to come back to us, or to abide with us :

“ Who hath the FATHER and the SON
May be left, but not alone ! ”

Yes, if we associate our loneliness, our pain of being left alone in our daily life, with the loneliness of JESUS, then blessed indeed will that lone hour of our last going forth from this world be, if we have acted upon this principle ; blessed shall we be if His Presence has been our stay, and our solace, our guard against temptation, our source of consolation through life. Alone, we may be, and yet not alone. For He has said, “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” All things else will fail. Day by day, the longer we live, first this one goes, then that : here a child, there a parent, here a brother, there a sister, here a wife, there a husband, and we are left *alone* : alone, but not alone : for He is ready to supply the place of *all* !

All that we have to do to counteract the depression of loneliness is to live in union with Him, to offer our sufferings to Him, to offer any work we may do to Him, to take our sins to Him, to do His will, to accept the Heavenly FATHER's will.

And *then* He Himself says, "Whosoever shall do the will of My FATHER which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." And once more and lastly, in that last hour, the hour of death, He will be all in all to us, and will not leave us alone.

Alone indeed in one sense many of us must, and shall be, but *not* alone! None, it is true, can accompany us in that last long journey. We must *then* leave all behind. But even *then* He says, "When thou passest through the waters," even the waters of that Jordan which divide us from the Promised land, "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire" (even that last fiery passage of the final struggle, the final assault of the Evil one,) "when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: for I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy SAVIOUR."

SERMON XXIV.

Maundy Thursday.

JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

PHILIPPIANS II. 8.

“HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF.”

“THE more He abases Himself for me, the dearer He is to me,” says the great S. Bernard. The more He lowers Himself, the more He stoops; the more He humiliates Himself, by so much more may we delight to honour, reverence, praise, love and adore, and worship Him!

Why do we bow the knee at those words in the Nicene Creed, “Was Incarnate by the HOLY GHOST, of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man?” Why do we “glory in the Cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST” with S. Paul? Why do we say with S. Cyril, “Let us not be ashamed of the Cross of CHRIST: but though another hide it, do thou openly seal it on thy brow, that the devil beholding that Princely sign, may flee far away

trembling :” or again, as he says in another place, “ When thou art going to dispute with unbelievers concerning the Cross of CHRIST, first make with thy hand the sign of CHRIST’s Cross :” or again, “ Be not ashamed to confess the Cross ; for angels glory in it, saying, ‘ We know Whom ye seek, JESUS the Crucified !’ Canst thou not say, O Angels, I know Whom ye seek, ‘ my Master ?’ No ! but he says with boldness, ‘ I know the Crucified,’ for the Cross is a crown, not a dishonour.” And, once more, whilst on this part of my subject, let me add another sentence from the same S. Cyril, (who was Archbishop of Jerusalem very little more than three hundred years after our LORD’s Crucifixion,) “ Be the Cross,” he says, “ our seal : made with boldness by our fingers on our brow : and in everything, over the bread we eat and the cup we drink : in our coming, and going out : before we sleep, when we lie down : when we awake : when we are in the way, and when we are still.”

So that it follows that in *whatever way* it has pleased our dear LORD to *humiliate* Himself, in *that very way* it should be our blessed privilege, and happiness to exalt Him. Good Friday itself would be comparatively of little importance without Maundy Thursday. The LORD might indeed have suffered on Good Friday, but without to-day, without *this* day, there would have been no *continuous* showing forth of the LORD’s death ; there

would have been no *continuous* re-presenting of that one Sacrifice; there would have been no means of applying that Sacrifice to our souls for their salvation without this day!

Without this day the link would have been wanting, between God's grace and our souls: the channel would not have been supplied between the Creator and His creature. The natural life would have existed, but not the spiritual life, for it is written, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." But even in the baptized, the soul no doubt has lived, and has lived by Baptism. Yet that life is not sustained and nourished without the Blessed Sacrament. You may light a lamp, and trim it, but unless you keep it supplied with oil, it must eventually go out. The flame may flicker on, almost longer than one could have thought it possible, but it cannot last except indeed by a miracle. But miracles are not of common occurrence, or they would cease to be miracles. So is it with the soul and its need of frequent supplies of grace in the Blessed Sacrament!

O the mysteries of Love that were wrought out on that first Maundy Thursday in the upper chamber at Jerusalem! Think of the Love of Jesus in instituting that Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood: think of the condescension of Jesus in stooping to become the Food of His

creatures. Think of the humiliation of JESUS, not only in doing this, but also knowing perfectly, having a Divine foreknowledge of the many profanations, of the many indignities He would have to suffer, as for instance from the unworthy communion of Judas ; from the rejection of Him by scoffers ; from the scorning of Him by infidels ; down to those many, many carelessly prepared for, thankless, heartless, or unworthy communions received since, and now, and as long as the Church militant here on earth shall last !

But the wonder perhaps is not so much at His condescension, His love, His Humiliation, as at our strange ingratitude, our curious difficulty in taking in this blessed truth : the wonder consists in a great measure in the cold, cautious, calculating way which we for the most part have, in thinking about JESUS in the Blessed Sacrament ! We, for the most part, approach the subject with such almost superstitious dread. For, oddly enough, extremes, even in this matter of religion, as in most other things, meet. We want to have it exactly defined what we are to believe. And while we are making up our minds as to the amount of faith we are disposed to give, we die, and there is an end of all questionings and disputings.

Nay, rather, life is too short for all this kind of thing. But people like controversy. It gives them some importance. It gives them occupation. People are for the most part pleased at con-

troversial sermons; strangely enough, most pleased at controversial sermons on those very points about which there can be, or at least ought to be, no controversy. Many profess to be instructed, gratified, convinced, or the reverse,—it does not very much matter which. When people *talk* about sermons, especially doctrinal sermons, it is pretty nearly a sure sign of one of two things, namely, that they will either do them or somebody else harm. I do not know a greater irreverence, ordinarily speaking, than discussing the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament. Let me put it to you very plainly. Either our Blessed LORD did say, or He did not say, “*This is My Body,*” “*This is My Blood,*” of the Blessed Sacrament. Either the Church has held, or she has not held this as an article of faith. If He *did* say so, and the Church *has* always received it, to ordinary Christians there is an end of the whole matter. All the rest are details, which follow this one great central Truth. If we once accept this in all its fulness, such difficulties as those about Fasting Communion, that is, not touching anything whatever to eat or drink when we are going to receive Communion, vanish. We do not want to dispute, we only want to do that, whatever it may be, much more that which is ordered by the Church, which is a proof of the greatest act of love, of reverence, of inconvenience, which after all is only another name for self-sacrifice or self-

denial. In fact, whatever is most *naturally* distasteful to us, in every matter of religion, is nearly always the most beneficial.

Self-denial involves the very principle of self-humiliation. Now obedience is the very highest form of humility, because it is the submission of the will. And so our text goes on, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient." Of whom does the Apostle speak? Nay does he not speak of CHRIST JESUS Himself? "He humbled Himself, and became obedient, wherefore God hath very highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow." Now if at the Name of JESUS, every knee is to bow; what are we to do with our knees or our bodies in the Presence of JESUS? If JESUS our LORD humiliated Himself thus for us, not only on the Cross once, but in suffering perpetual humiliation in the Blessed Sacrament, surely our Blessed privilege, happiness, our joy, and our glory should be to give Him honour in that Sacrament.

When we are in trouble we naturally enough come to Communion; when we have received forgiveness of our sins, we come for the seal of that forgiveness in Communion. When we are struggling against, and heartily and earnestly endeavouring to subdue some besetting sin in us, we come to Communion for strength to resist. When we have overcome some bad habit, and long to

persevere in holy living, we come to Communion for grace and strength to persevere. But what is this but coming to JESUS? for it would be little benefit to us to come without having this thought fixed in our mind. Practically every devout and religious-minded Christian, of every so called way of thinking, does or wishes to do this. And no doubt that according to his faith, we may believe that each reaps some blessing, some consolation, some spiritual advantage.

But on the other hand let us not forget how much is lost by not coming to JESUS CHRIST with the full true and only true faith in the Blessed Sacrament. I am quite sure that many *unconsciously* do so come, who *know* nothing whatever about what this true and indeed this only doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament is. They have grown up in certain habits, and anything new startles, often puzzles and perplexes them. This is not the fault, my brethren, at any rate for the most part, of the people, but of their teachers. And a plentiful crop of infidelity, of utter disbelief in even the first principles of Christianity, has this teaching produced: I mean a mere *preaching* of Christianity with CHRIST left out, which is after all another name for an unsacramental Religion, or a religion which has not its basis and foundation in JESUS CHRIST present in the Sacraments.

Teachers and taught then, priest and people, let our one aim be to have a great love for JESUS;

and especially in this Blessed Sacrament. If we exercised our love only half as much as our wits, or our love of talking, we should not find this a hard matter. If we would but exercise our self-denial, only half as much as we give way to our self-indulgence, well, then I am sure, quite a series of difficulties would be removed out of our way. If we exercised our humility only half as much as we yield to our pride, we should cut at the root of the whole matter, we should become gradually more and more filled with reverence, and awe, and fear; we should abase ourselves in exalting Him. We should think less and less, and care less and less about what people think of us, or about the talk of our neighbours, or the opinion of the world.

What *will* it matter a few years hence? O in the light of Eternity! O in the hour of death when our feet are trembling on the brink of the dark river, believe me, things wear a very different aspect. Then the Love of JESUS: the Love of JESUS as He would have us to love Him: the Presence of JESUS, the Passion of JESUS, the Cross of JESUS, will be all in all, and everything: the opinion of the world will be absolutely nothing.

There will be no comfort *then* but the Rod and the Staff, in that valley of the Shadow of Death, when the Presence of JESUS will be our only and our everlasting Stay, our Comfort, and Joy, and Crown of Rejoicing!

SERMON XXV.

Good Friday.

THE SIGHT OF JESUS CRUCIFIED.

S. LUKE XXIII. 48, 49.

“AND ALL THE PEOPLE THAT CAME TOGETHER TO THAT SIGHT, BEHOLDING THE THINGS WHICH WERE DONE, SMOTE THEIR BREASTS AND RETURNED.”

To That Sight! To that awful, terrible Sight! Such a Sight as the world never saw before, and can never see again! The Sight of the death by Crucifixion of the SON of God, of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. A Sight however which perhaps, nay, almost certainly, could only have been dimly seen. But this very dimness imparted mystery and awe, for during all, or rather during the greater part of the time, that our LORD was hanging on the Cross, “from the sixth to the ninth hour,” there was “darkness over all the land.” Now no doubt this was a supernatural darkness which was felt,

and which only made what was seen or heard all the more dread and mysterious. The time of this darkness, as the Evangelist tells us, was from twelve o'clock until three, just, that is, when the sun would have been in its full meridian brightness.

Or when was it that full sight was regained? Did the full sight first come *after* the death? when, that is, the soul of JESUS had left the Sacred Body, and that Body hung lifeless on the Cross? Was it *then*, that the light again shines and fully reveals to them what a terrible work theirs had been?

But above all, was *this* the Sight (so awful, yet so blessed!) which gave light to some of their hearts, which found its way through and penetrated the thick darkness of those hearts, and touched them, and moved them with compunction, and melted them with love, and perhaps converted some of them?

Thank God! Thank God, we read that "all the people that came together to That Sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts." Do not let us be hard upon them. Do not let us at present criticise their feelings, or their motives too closely. They "smote their breasts." O that was a good beginning! Why it was the very thing for which the Pharisee looked with such contempt at the Publican, when he "smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

Yes, men's hearts had been, and were moved; their feelings of compassion and sympathy were excited; each felt that *he* had had a share in the work of bringing about That Sight. Perhaps some, nay, how many amongst them! had jeered Him, some perhaps had even smitten Him. Ah! far better now they smite themselves. Smite hard: smite home: let each blow slay a sin. Smite upon your breasts. Yes, indeed, *there* was the real criminal, *there* the real malefactor. Smite hard, and harder yet, and the blow will not be too severe. Surely that was indeed a blessed Smiting upon the Breast, brought about by That Sight! Surely let us hope there was both love and humility in it. Surely we will not say it was a merely formal action. Surely it was no mere outward demonstration with no inward grief or steadfastness of purpose to amend. "All the people that came together to that sight, smote upon their breasts and returned."

Yes, they "smote upon their breasts," but they "returned." It was needful to return. They would fain perhaps have remained, but they "returned." Ah, there was the danger! It might have been less danger to some than to others, but still it was some danger to all. For in returning see what they had to face. They were leaving That Sight. They were leaving the safety of that Presence. They would have to come across many people who had not seen That Sight. Some they would

meet even who *had* seen it, and yet were not one whit nearer to smite their hearts; nay, some perhaps, whose hearts were hardened, even by That Sight, and who would be ready to crucify Him afresh. They had to face the fact of the wearing off of good impressions. They had to realize that they were committed to a fresh and a new life, a new tone of thought, new habits of mind and of body. They had to face the world, that smiling, cruel world which always would fain be hiding the Cross with roses, or that would always secretly or openly oppose religion. They had perhaps to meet members of their own family who would probably sneer, and scoff, or at least treat them with refined pity, little short of contempt, for their superstition, their folly, their madness, their singularity; who would charge them with credulity, or childishness, or an effeminate, womanish, emotional religion, so far removed from common sense, and masculine, manly intelligence!

They would meet people who would affect to be children in malice, and men in understanding, or people who would repudiate anything revoltingly wicked, but who will not and cannot understand why so much should be made of so little. So little! Ah, no: shame upon such cold, dead, unfeeling loveless hearts! No one who had seen That Sight could speak thus. The power of the Cross once felt to the point of making a man in

sorrow, and faith, and love “Smite his Breast,” is a living, and a lasting power. That iron enters into the soul. That man, if he feels that it was a real, vital power, may say with S. Paul, “From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the Marks of the LORD JESUS,” the stigmata, the brands burnt in, indelible, out of sight it may be, but none the less, nay, all the more efficacious and powerful for that very reason :—“Marks” out of sight produced by “That Sight.”

Well, my brethren, I have done. I will not pursue the subject further. I will scarcely venture to apply it. Both you and I have had quite enough to think of to-day,¹ to render it unnecessary for you to hear, or me to preach any more. I only say the Cross has been raised up, and placed before us. “JESUS CHRIST and Him Crucified” has been evidently set before us. In faith we have seen That Sight. We have meditated upon those Words of Love the SAVIOUR spake on the Cross. We have sung our solemn hymns of Penitence. We have Smitten upon our Breasts. Now we are about to Return !

May God’s blessing be with us. May the Cross be fixed deep in our hearts. May the great goodness of God deepen our penitence, so

¹ This sermon was preached at a late Evening Service of a Good Friday, nearly every hour of which had been taken up with services, meditations, and sermons, &c.

that we may to-night when we have “returned,” or to-morrow make a good preparation, and may prove That Sight has had some real effect upon us, and that we *have* Smitten upon our Breasts to some purpose, by making good confessions, and then on the early Easter morning happy, happy Communions !

SERMON XXVI.

Easter.

THE MORNING OF JOY.

PSALM XXX. 5.

“HEAVINESS MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMETH
IN THE MORNING.”

IN this very Psalm a little lower down occurs ■ similar, and an equally beautiful expression,—“Thou hast turned,” says the Psalmist, “my Heaviness into Joy : Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.” Or rather let us take the whole Psalm as a joyful song of triumph for present deliverance, and ■ thankful grateful remembrance of past sorrows. It seems to say that God’s visitations, and punishments, and the sorrows, and trials He is pleased to send us, are often “heavy” indeed, but that they have an end. They have an end in the sense that they are sent with an object, and an end because they must finish ; and that “heavy” though they may be, yet they are as nothing compared to the joy

and glorious brightness and gladness which *must* come sooner or later, if we have but patience, and trustfulness, and love, and courage, and perseverance to “endure unto the end.”

No wonder that this is a favourite Easter Psalm ! For there could not well be one which speaks so plainly, first of the Passion, and then of the Resurrection of our own dear LORD. It keeps the Cross indeed steadily in sight before us, but we feel that it gives us also a glorious view of the Crown. It brings to our minds indeed the dark *night* in Gethsemane when JESUS said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;” when “He began to be sore amazed and exceeding *heavy*,” and the Blood drops of the Agony rolled to the ground !

But it brings to our minds also that other night, that night which came even in the “clear day,” when there was “darkness over all the land,” and the Heavenly FATHER hid His Face from the Face of the Anointed, from the Face of the Well-beloved, only Begotten SON ; that day-night when all nature mourned with her God, and the flowers drooped, and the birds were silent, and men’s voices were hushed ; and the heavy, heavy weight of our sins drew upon the Sinless One the heavy displeasure of the Loving Heavenly FATHER !

It brings to our minds also the night of Good Friday, “when the even was come;” when the Body of Him Whose Spirit had fled, (commended

into the Hands of the Heavenly FATHER,) was taken down from the Cross, and the cruel Nails were gently drawn from the Hands and Feet, and lovingly placed in the bosom of Mary; when with reverent hands the Mother of Sorrows detached the Blood-stained Crown of Thorns from the sacred Brow, and they wrapped the blessed Body in the fine linen and placed It in the dark Tomb!

We cannot avoid thinking also of the sad heavy hearts of those who went to their desolate homes on that Night, feeling, oh so terrible ■ blank! leaving all they loved behind them in that gloomy Sepulchre. Surely that was a "Night" of "heaviness," and of deep, deep sorrow!

And so that heavy Night dragged itself, and its leaden weight, along, and every moment seemed an hour, and every hour a life.

Picture to yourselves the desolate, dark, dreary hours of that Night! Remember how in your own sorrows *your* Night is spent. Even sleep itself scarce brings relief. You wake with a vague sense at first of terror. You begin slowly to take in that you have lost *something* you once had. But that blank to *these* mourners was filled up only by the recollection of the cruel sufferings: but even those sufferings, almost more bearable, almost more easy to endure than the blank which followed them! Think what must at least *some* homes have been that Night! Think of the homes of the Blessed Mother, and the Beloved Disciple,

of Mary Magdalene, and of the Apostles, and of many others, of *some* at least, who had loved Him, whose Love to them had been all they prized on earth, whose love for Him was all they had to give, and they gave it, though they knew not, and could not have known to the full what WAS the Love of CHRIST to them, its breadth, height, length, depth, its immensity ! the Love of CHRIST which passeth all knowledge : the Love of Him Whom they thought they had lost !

Those best will understand me, who have seen much or anything of suffering and death : others *will* understand me, when their "Night" of "Heaviness" comes, as come it must somewhen. Yet all can easily understand, even if they have not *felt*, somewhat of this "heaviness," this sense of depression ; by thinking for a moment of what any heavy, crushing, overwhelming weight of trouble is ! To know there is *something* which has happened to us and yet often not to be able to take in, often *has* happened for a time, not to be able to realise what. And then to have the full force of one's sorrow, coming in like a flood, and leaving one, "sore amazed" and very, very "heavy." Such must in some degree have been the character of those heavy Nights of the Agony ; of the Death and of the Burial ! Heavy, heavy Nights, indeed ! Such *may* have been in some degree the feelings of the heavy, heavy hearts of those mourners of Good Friday and of Easter Eve ! But listen ! "Come

unto Me, all ye that labour, and are *heavy* laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you . . . for My yoke is easy and My burden is *light* !”

And now see how the scene changes. The LORD is risen ! Why do they not go wild with joy ? The Night is passing, nay it is scarce past its darkest. It is scarce past midnight, when “very early in the morning,” before daybreak came the Joy, that Joy beyond all Joys, the Easter Joy, the only pledge of our future Joys in Heaven. “Heaviness may endure for a night, but Joy cometh in the morning !” The clouds, like the stone from the door of the sepulchre, were rolled away ! The grave clothes were changed for the dazzling brightness of the glorious Body of the Risen LORD ! The “sackcloth was put off,” and He is girded with gladness, and brightness and ineffable radiance. The earth itself awakes as if from a sleep of death, of which Night is so fitting a type ! All nature rises to greet the risen LORD ! the flowers open ! the birds pour forth their joyous songs ! Yes, verily “through the tender mercy of our God, the Day-spring from on high had visited” them, and gave “light to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death,” and guided their “feet into the way of Peace !”

“Peace !” does it say ? Peace ! why it was the very message, the very word with which He so often greets them on that morning of Joy, and that Day of Gladness ! Here at length, respectively,

for each and all of them, is the reward for all their trials, or a pardon for their penitence, or a salve for all their sorrows! All was, for the time at least, forgotten in that blessed meeting again after that heavy time of sorrow and separation! All is forgotten too as it were by Him. He remembers no more the desertion of the Apostles, nor the denial of Peter. Their tears, together with the Loving Penitence of the Magdalene, their heaviness, and sadness of heart had now passed away in the Easter greeting of Peace! It is not hard to tell *whose* sorrows had been heaviest of all in that past heavy night, though that loving heart was never heavy for sin. But *her* sorrow was none the less. Nay, perhaps and for that very reason all the more. Surely it was *hers* through whose very soul the sword had pierced. Therefore *her* Joy must also needs be the greatest, the fullest, the deepest, the sweetest, the only one unalloyed by a sense of past failing towards the Divine LORD. She was unlike the Magdalene, in being Purity itself; she was unlike S. Peter, for she had no cowardly denial with which to reproach herself: most like the Beloved Disciple, but unlike him too, for she could only be like *herself*! None could have suffered like *her*; to none could that Night of Heaviness have been so heavy: to none could the Morning of Joy, that happy Easter Day, have been so joyful. Hail, Mary! full of Grace!

And Mary Magdalene! and Peter, and the rest! How *their* hearts too must have been full of love, and joy, when He met them, and when they realised, as at length, and only at length, they did, that JESUS, their own JESUS, JESUS CHRIST Who was crucified, their LORD and their God, did indeed stand before them with no one word of reproach for their past cowardice, or their past desertions, or their past lack of love, but only with a message of Peace!

Let this Eastertide message through the text be to us a type of our life, and above all of the sorrows of life! It is such a bright, cheery, hopeful text, this dear text of ours! It helps us so well to take a true estimate of our troubles, our trials, our sorrows, our heaviness, and to set them at their proper value. We are not to be, we *cannot* be indifferent to them. We are not to affect to treat them with lightness. That would be simply to be unfeeling, and to be heartless about them. To bear troubles what is called philosophically is all very well for a heathen, but it has nothing to do with the way in which a Christian should bear them. It is Easter! It is the Resurrection! It is the Life beyond the grave! It is the life where shall be no tears, or sorrows, or troubles, or separations! It is the recollection of all these, it is the living with these in view, that does indeed, and only can prevent our feeling the heaviness of our sorrows in one sense, but

does indeed and that most assuredly, give us calmness, and resignation, and even, it may well be, an anticipated joy, in recognising the Loving Hand which is laid upon us, for a purpose so good, so wise, so loving, as the Love of God alone can devise for those that love God.

I think there is one danger at least which arises from the heaviness of sorrow, that we must be very watchful against, and that is gloominess and depression, not to say despair. It is very natural, but it is very wrong to give way to these feelings.

I put despair out of the question, for that is the deadliest of deadly sins. And for this reason. Because it limits the love of God. But there are many ways of at least trying to conquer depression, and escape from it: amongst which perhaps are these :

The Remembrance of the Passion : for that very feeling, *our* very feeling and our every feeling, of "heaviness," and sorrow was borne for us, has been borne on the Cross.

Next the Remembrance of the Resurrection : with its pledge and promise to us of our future morning of joy, if only we endure to the end, for that is a promise and pledge to us of joining again those we love, never more to be separated from them.

But we must not only think and meditate upon these two great mysteries of the Faith, but *act*. We must not only make an effort of the memory, or of the recollection, but do something practical.

Well then, my next practical suggestion, as against heaviness or depression of spirits, shall be to make frequent Acts of Prayer : especially Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love, of Submission to the will of God, and, above all, of desire to be entirely, fully, unreservedly conformed to the Will of God.

But even this is not sufficient, if more lies in our power. All these are good and even necessary. But the chief remedy against depression in its many forms, is an *active* Life of Love to God's creatures. Nothing in this world so tends to foster depression as a slothful, useless life, a dreamy mode of existence rather than life, a life harmful to ourselves, and useless to others. We ought not to have time to give way to depression ! Life is too short for it. Eternity is too long. It is too long for us to run any risk of losing our hopes of happiness, and be shut out of heaven, by being swallowed up by our "heaviness," which is certain to make us morbid, discontented, unloving, fault-finding, and indeed rebellious against God's will. And how shall we reach Heaven, where God's will is the only one will, how shall we reach it, I say, without doing and accepting God's will, in all things, brightly and cheerfully here on earth.

What after all is this heaviness. It only endures for a Night ! And what a little time a Night is ! And how much of that Night is already over,—the "Night is far spent !" And the Heaviness can only last in the Night. The Joy is to

come in the Morning. O that Morning, that bright Morning when the Sun is to rise, that shall never set ! O Morn of morns, when JESUS shall stand on the shore and welcome us to the everlasting mansions of Joy and Peace : when the wicked shall for ever cease from troubling and the weary for ever be at rest : where can be no more "Heaviness," but all Joy : no more "Night," but always and ever, Bright Day !

SERMON XXVII.

Easter.

THINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

ACTS I. 3.

“BEING SEEN OF THEM FORTY DAYS, AND SPEAKING OF THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

WHAT a strange Forty Days this must have been to the Disciples! What a reaction from the terrible time they had lately passed through! To have their risen LORD going in and out amongst them again: to have Him appearing, showing Himself from time to time: appearing under different forms, and revealing Himself to them by different modes; sometimes making Himself known by His voice only, sometimes by His actions. He calls “Mary,” and she says, “Rabboni.” He shows His sacred wounds to Thomas, and S. Thomas says, “My LORD and my GOD.” He breaks bread, and He is known to them by His breaking of bread! So was He, at least twelve or thirteen times (as recorded in the Gospels and Epistles,) “seen by them:” seen first

by one, then by another, appearing to one, or to two, or three together ; or, as S. Paul says, “ seen of above five hundred brethren at once,” during these same “ Forty Days.”

Who was this, that was thus seen? It was the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He was the very same, Whom some at least of them had so recently “ seen ” in the hands of His enemies, apparently powerless to resist. It was He who was “ seen ” enduring every kind of scorn and outrage, every kind of pain and shame, until at last they had “ seen ” Him die, and some of them had laid, or “ seen ” Him laid, a worn, bruised, bleeding Body in the tomb. Yes, it was the same JESUS CHRIST, with the same Body, Whom they now saw. But O, how changed ! The Marks of the Suffering were there. The Nail prints, and the Spear wound were there. The lineaments of the Face, the Form of the features were there. But now O how changed, though the same : the same Body, but no longer the Body of Death, but the Body of the Resurrection, for His Body was now a glorified, a “ glorious Body.”

We may conceive too how the disciples “ to whom He showed Himself alive after His Passion, by many infallible proofs,” how they must have been astonished and amazed, at His sudden and unexpected appearances. How they must have been amazed too, at the quiet, silent, or if I may so say, unobtrusive and familiar way in which He

appears, and is "seen" and makes Himself known to them.

Now we see Him as He appears in a garden, now in an upper room, probably that old familiar "Upper Room;" now, as two of them were walking together; then by the Seaside, then on the Mountain. All the time through these Forty Days, He was thus going in and out among them. Sometimes known and recognized at once, sometimes not known, and unrecognized, until He brought Himself to their recollection by some well-known word or gesture. And the whole of these descriptions of His Appearances, are so perfectly natural and real. These Apostles, as yet not endowed with power from on High, and the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, act so much as we should expect them to act under the circumstances. Even at best they hesitate to take in the whole truth. Sometimes indeed they say, "It is the LORD:" sometimes their "hearts" even "burn within them," while He talks to them: sometimes they are terrified and affrighted: sometimes they are glad and rejoice. And yet during all these Forty Days, He was from time to time, and at intervals, being "seen" of them.

But we are not only told in the text that He was thus "seen" but also what He was then *doing* when He was thus "seen." He was "speaking" to them "of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." What *were* these "things?"

Why what would the Good Shepherd be *likely* to be speaking of when He was about to leave the sheep for whom He died? What would the chief Shepherd and Bishop of the soul be *likely* to be speaking of, when He was about to intrust His sheep to other hands, and those others even His under shepherds? What would the Master, so soon about to be removed from their head, be *likely* to be speaking of to His stewards, to those whom He had appointed over His household to give the servants their “meat in due season?” What would the King so soon to be translated to the Heavenly Kingdom be *likely* to be speaking of to those whom He had appointed as His ambassadors or His representatives, those to whom He had (as far as in them lay to receive it) delegated His power? We shall perhaps best know and understand it by remembering what is *meant* by the expression, the “Kingdom of God.” And what *was* this Kingdom of God? Surely it could mean nothing else than the Church of CHRIST. It could not mean merely for instance Heaven. As if the LORD CHRIST had been speaking of them only about their *own* individual welfare, and telling them a kind of private personal way by which they were to reach Heaven. Nor is it as if He had been reasoning with them of righteousness, and temperance and judgment to come. Much of this, or at least some of this, there may have been. He may have warned them of their own trials,

and crosses, and temptations, and what they should undergo for His sake before they reaped their reward. He may have guarded them against being led away by heresies, and schism, and divisions in the future.

But surely He was not only speaking to *them*, but to them for *our* sakes, for the sake of His whole Church. He was instructing His under shepherds how they were to bring and to keep the sheep within the fold, and to tend them and to find them pasture, and to lead them forth beside the waters of comfort. He was instructing them in the nature and grace of the Sacraments. He was instructing them in the order and government of His Church, of that Church which He had purchased with His own Blood, and was now committing to their charge!

Still even yet, and all the way through, even at the very last, they could only take in the great and blessed teaching very faintly, very imperfectly, very inadequately. They dreamt of a kind of reign on earth, a kingdom on earth, a reign of temporal power. They ask even at the last, "LORD, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And yet He had been "speaking" to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," not of the kingdom of Israel. Hear His answer! So gentle, so forbearing, so patient was He in His teaching; "It is not for you," He says, "to know the times or the seasons

which the FATHER hath put in His own power." But, He added, "*ye shall receive Power.*" Not such a Power as ye imagine, but a spiritual, heavenly, divine Power: ye shall receive the Power not only to heal the sick, or to raise the dead, but to preach the Gospel, and to convert the sinner, to convey pardon and grace to the sinladen soul, to give the blessed Gift of Forgiveness, of Absolution, and the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, and, above all, Power to consecrate bread and wine, to be My Body and My Blood for the sustenance, for the Spiritual Food and sustenance of the Faithful, for the Strengthening and refreshing of their souls and bodies. "Ye shall receive power," to carry out these instructions I give you, these "things" of the Kingdom of God, "after that the HOLY GHOST is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me!" Witnesses, martyrs, witnesses to the death, "both in Jerusalem, and Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We are now, dear brethren, in these Forty days, these Forty Days not like those days when JESUS was in the wilderness, but the Forty Days of the risen Life of JESUS on earth. It should be the type to us of the regulating of our own life. Ours should be a life which delights to be hearing and "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." "If ye then be risen with CHRIST," says the Apostle in this week's Epistle, "seek those things which are above, where CHRIST

sitteth on the right hand of God!" Seek earnestly, O my brethren, the things of the Kingdom of God, and of His CHRIST. Seek *them* first, and seek them foremost! Seek them as that merchantman sought and found that one Pearl of great price, and went and sold all that he had and bought it. Seek earnestly and zealously, but seek prudently with a Gospel prudence. It is one thing to be foremost and unreal in talking about Church, and religious matters generally, and it is quite another to be over-reserved and reticent about them.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If the "things of the Kingdom of God," (take it as we will, of the Church of CHRIST or the future Kingdom of glory) were matters which lay very close to our hearts, we should not only be not averse to speaking of them, but should take delight in directly religious conversation. It has its dangers no doubt. Above all it has that terrible danger of unreality or cant, or hypocrisy. But why cannot we be simple and natural, and not forced and unreal, in talking about religion? Surely at least there should be no reserve on this score between a Priest and his people. Preaching for the most part is meant for the heathen, for the conversion of souls. No doubt there are many nominal Christians who are practically living the lives of heathens, and virtually denying their LORD Who bought, Who redeemed, Who died and rose again for them. No doubt there

are many Christians who are utterly and entirely ignorant of the very first principles of their religion. And sermons possibly or even probably, are good for them. But the real influence and the real gain, (I think at least very often) comes from speaking in private, soul to soul, of "the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Each soul has its own individual history, and its own individual wants. And the very office of the Minister of Religion is to help that soul, to instruct it, to direct it according to its needs, to supply it with the means of grace, and above all, to speak to it of, and advance it towards the Kingdom of God!

But after all, it is the grace of God's Holy Spirit which gives the power to the words spoken and the means used. Sermons are only in so far useful as they are spoken by the grace, and in the power of God's Holy Spirit, and received into hearts prepared by the same Spirit. It is so indeed with all the things of the "Kingdom of God." Sermons are sermons, and sacraments are sacraments, and both, duly preached and duly administered, have God's grace attached to them. Of course Sacraments in a far higher way, but still in one sense both come under the same rules. As far as we are concerned, as individuals, even graces bring forth, at least for the most part, no fruit, when they fall upon soil not prepared to receive them : graces, that is, whether Sacraments

or Sermons, administered or preached to those who do not value and love "the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

Let this be the keynote to our life, especially during these Forty Days, namely to endeavour to cherish a great love for the "things pertaining to the Kingdom of God," to be more earnest and devout in our lives and conversations, to be more distinctively religious, teachable, obedient Subjects of the Kingdom of God, Sheep of the Good Shepherd, and Disciples of the Risen LORD !

SERMON XXVIII.

Easter.

LIFE IN DEATH: DEATH IN LIFE.

S. JOHN XII. 24.

“VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, EXCEPT A CORN OF WHEAT FALL INTO THE GROUND AND DIE, IT ABIDETH ALONE, BUT IF IT DIE, IT BRINGETH FORTH MUCH FRUIT.”

THERE are many lessons to be learnt from a Festival time besides lessons of Thanksgiving. Great as that duty may be, and is, yet it is only *one* duty out of many. We may quite well believe that a more or less decorated Church, processions of Clergy and Choir, banners, psalms and hymns of praise, are the symbols and outward expressions of thankful hearts.

Those who are external to the Church system, or the mere curious gazers, or even those who look at such occasions as, so to speak, commercial speculations, and measure the well-being or, as the phrase goes, success, of the Church, or the

success of any Festival as commensurate with the amount of the Offertory,—such persons as these are very likely to fall into the error of speaking of such Services as likely to tend to sensuous worship, as sensational in short, as likely to end in mere excitement; as being meaningless, or frivolous, or contrary to what they conceive to be the spirit of the English Church. In short they fall short of the mark, and err in *defect* as much as it is said, or as they say, others err in excess.

But all this will work itself out in time, especially if such persons are, or get to be in earnest, unprejudiced, and a little charitable; and also if those who take part in these Services conduct themselves in a really devout, reverent, quiet manner.

To a certain extent these weak brethren are quite right. In such Services, as in everything that is good, there *is* always a danger of abuse. There *is* a danger of resting in the “form” without the “power of godliness;” of the “letter” obscuring the “spirit;” of ceremony without the heart; of praising God with apparent heartiness, or even of showing forth His praise, with the lips only, and not in the life.

A time of Festival like Easter, is a right good and holy time for bright and joyous Services. Let each man of us examine himself in what spirit he joins in them. Let the conscience of each one

answer it to God. To his own Master each man of us stands or falls, and not by the judgment of another.

Our Text however, takes deeper and wider ground. It deals with another kind of Easter, of which this present Season is, nay our daily life should be a type. It reaches beyond Easter, even to the Ascension. It takes in Lent, the sowing time also. It takes in Life, and Death, and the Rising again, and the Eternal Life. It includes both repentance and the joy of forgiveness. In it is implied not only a harvest, but the sowing, the decay, the hidden state, the up-springing, the growth, the reaping, the gathering into the barn, the bringing forth much fruit of the grain of corn, or, as it is written, the "Corn of Wheat." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a Corn of Wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

And here notice first the apparent contradiction contained in the words of the text. "*Except*" this "Corn of Wheat" *die*, it will bring forth no "fruit." Strange, that to "bring forth fruit," it must needs die; and not only so, but it must needs decay! Nay more, its powers of reproduction are conditional on its decay. And to decay it must "fall into the ground." It must first "fall," not *on to*, nor on the surface of, but *into* the ground. For a certain time it must remain there: it must, as it were, *wait* patiently in the

ground : as S. James says, " Behold the husbandman *waiteth* for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain." It must remain in the ground through the dews of autumn, through the frost and cold of winter. It must *die*, though even in death mysteriously joined to the mysterious principle of Life. It must wait until the appointed season comes when it is to spring up ; " first, the blade," as our LORD says in the Gospel according to S. Mark, " then, the ear, after that, the full corn in the ear," until at length, watered by the showers of spring, and ripened by the summer's sun, " the Fruit is brought forth" and immediately the sickle is put in " because the Harvest is come."

Who can doubt about Miracles, when such a miracle as this, such a surpassing wonder with its solemn, cheering, hopeful lesson, is wrought yearly within the experience of each one of us ! Death in Life—Life in Death ! The little grain of corn teaching the silent but mighty lesson of an All-pervading Influence, of an Omnipotent and Omnipresent Power, ever at work, even in this tiniest atom of God's own creation, ever present not only to preserve, to cherish, to foster it ; not only so, but even in its very decay to reproduce it ; and further still, to multiply it, so that it should " bring forth *much* fruit." " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into

the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

But let us see also in what connection the words of the Text stand. They were spoken by our LORD Himself within a few days of His Crucifixion, and it is evident, by the very formula with which they begin, that He wished to draw, as it were, special attention to them. He rarely uses that formula, and then only before the utterance of some mighty Master-Truth. First He says, "The hour is *come* that the Son of Man should be glorified," and then He adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Why, here is a wonder indeed ! He spoke these words then of *Himself*. It is *He* who was *the* "Corn of Wheat." It is He who is our *Life* and the Principle of Life. It was He who was to undergo *Death*. It was He who, by His Incarnation, came down from heaven to be the Life of the world ! It was He who "fell into the ground," came down upon earth, was born of the the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead, and buried, and descended into the unseen place, into hell, even "into" the lower parts of the "earth." Take this word "earth" here in either sense, or both, take it, as you will, either as of the grave, or as of the place of departed spirits. It is He who "though His Flesh," as S. Peter says, "saw no corruption," rose again, triumphed over Satan, burst asunder the bars of the tomb, and led captivity captive. It is He who "loosed the pains of death, because

it was not possible that He should be holden of it." It is He who "was the *First-fruits* of them that slept;" who is "the Resurrection and the Life;" who in rising was the pledge of the Resurrection of the Dead; who not only rose Himself, but is the cause of *our* rising again. It is He, then, who did not "abide alone," but in that He died and rose again, brought forth "much fruit," that is, rescued untold numbers of souls,—yours and mine,—from an undying death. Therefore it is, that in the verse which immediately precedes the text we read, "And JESUS answered them, saying, The hour is come," (the Harvest-home of that holy Corn of Wheat!) "that the Son of Man should be glorified," and then it follows, "Verily, verily, I say unto you."

But let us read on, and we shall find this same idea of Death in Life and Life in Death underlying the next two verses also. Yes, paradox as it sounds, yet it is true! We have seen how true it is in the natural sense of the Corn of Wheat. It is true, we see, as applied to our LORD, the True Bread which came down from Heaven. And also it is true, in two senses, as regards ourselves. First of our own daily lives; and next, of our bodies after death. Let us take this latter sense first.

There is a Chapter in the Bible which has, almost beyond any other, given inexpressible comfort to many a poor mourner, as he stood at the side of all that was dear to him upon earth. They are

the last words he hears ordinarily before the body is committed to the ground. It is no time then for speculative theories, such as men delight in when death is out of sight.

But yet, in the moment of deep sorrow, *should* any doubt, through despair or overwhelming grief, cross the mind; *should* any be tempted to say, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" then, full and strong, comes the answer of rebuke, and yet the answer of faith: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened *except it die*: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. . . . So also is the Resurrection of the Dead."

And O! words of surpassing sweetness and loveliness! Words that pass the bounds of all earthly poetry! So true, so good, so beautiful, so full of consolation and buoyant hope, nay, even of exultation, to the poor mourner. Words, which as they steal into the ear, pour oil upon the wounded heart, or rather, ring like a solemn Psalm of Thanksgiving! Words which, though the eyes may be blinded with tears, yet at the same time flood the heart with joy as it drinks them in, and strives to realise for itself that grand truth, "Life in Death, Death in Life." Blessed

words which seem to say, Fear not, grieve not, weep not, thou heart-stricken mourner ! there need be, there is, there shall be, no final separation for those living or dead in the faith and fear of the LORD CHRIST, our Resurrection and our Life ! Thy brother, thy sister, thy husband, thy wife, thy father, thy mother, thy child shall not “ abide alone ” in the cold, lonely, cheerless grave, nay more, he shall, it may be, even in death, “ bring forth much fruit,” even the conversion of THY soul : just as the blood of martyrs is not only the seed but the growth of the Church ! He shall rise again. That poor body of whatever duration its earthly life may have been, whether that of ■ newly baptized infant, or that of one whose hairs were hoar ; whether that of one whom long illness or rapid disease, or what men call accident, hath for a time taken from thee ; that poor body, now “ sown in corruption,” shall be “ raised in incorruption ;” “ sown in dishonour,” shall be “ raised in glory ;” “ sown in weakness,” shall be “ raised in power ;” “ sown a natural body,” shall be “ raised a spiritual body !”

O what a wonderful commentary on these thrice hopeful, happy, glorious, bright, blessed words ! May it come into your hearts as an Angel’s message of life and love, in the hour of your own death, or when you stand at the grave of one you love, or in your home, it may be, made solitary by death. “ Except a corn of wheat fall into the

ground and die, it abideth alone ; but *if it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit."

But, once more, I must venture to give our text a wider meaning still. And not only so, but a meaning which answers very fully to its several parts. And, after all, this must be to us its great practical lesson. We may wonder at the marvels of God's creation in bringing the little grain of corn through decay to perfection. We may see and meditate upon the beauty of our LORD's own application of the text to Himself. We may take it as applying, by the authority of S. Paul, (or rather of God the HOLY GHOST,) to our own resurrection, or as a pledge of comfort in the death of a friend.

But practically we must learn ■ lesson from it which touches us now more closely, and that is, the duty of continual and continuous *self*-mortification, or in other words, *self*-denial. Then indeed, and only then, shall we fully, as well as practically, realise what is meant by "Death in Life," and "Life in Death."

Now let us put some passages of Holy Scripture side by side, and see to what conclusion they must inevitably lead us.

First, let us take the words of our Blessed LORD in the verses following directly after the text: "He that loveth his life," He says, "shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve

Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My FATHER honour." And then, with these words compare those of S. Paul, in that same chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians, to which I was referring just now, I mean the Chapter in the Burial Service: "I protest," says S. Paul, "by your rejoicing which I have in CHRIST JESUS our LORD, *I die daily.*" Now, remember, this could not mean only that S. Paul ran daily *risk of losing his life* through the violence of his enemies. It must necessarily mean also that *he led a mortified, self-denying life*; else would that verse in his own Epistle to the Galatians be utterly meaningless: "God forbid," he says there, "that I should glory, save in the Cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and *I unto the world.*"

And so again, we could find no meaning whatever in such words as these, when the same S. Paul says to the Colossians, "Ye are *dead*, and your life is *hid* with CHRIST in GOD." And again: "If one died for all, then are all *dead.*" And again: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do *mortify* the deeds of the body, ye shall Live." And in numberless other passages, what *can* be their meaning? Nothing else but "Life in Death—Death in Life."

Let me not be misunderstood, my dearest brethren. By self-mortification, I do not mean

bodily mortification only, such as fasting or any mere bodily austerities and outward acts of asceticism and discipline. But I *do* mean the bringing back, the getting under, the reducing to obedience of the *will*. That is self-denial in its highest and truest sense. On the other hand, God forbid that I should in any way say one word against asceticism, or the denying of oneself even in lawful pleasures. This would be to condemn such lives as those of Elijah, or S. John the Baptist, or S. Paul, or of those holy men and women who live apart from the world by a strict and severe rule in religious communities. Every man has his proper gift of God, every man has his proper duty to God and his neighbour. God may have given or have withheld such a gift from some or many of you, as well as from me. But He *does* will that both you and I should, each in our measure, exercise in some form or another the blessed fruit of self-denial, of subduing our wills, in a life of daily self-sacrifice; that is, in a life of daily Dying to self, and daily Living to God; for it is by this means, and this only, that we gain, by the merits and by the mercy of the One True Sacrifice, the salvation of our souls.

Nay, further, we gain more. We gain by self-denial the souls of *others* for heaven also. For as the Death of JESUS was the birth of Christianity, and as the blood of Martyrs is the seed of the Saints, so a life, or even one act of self-sacrifice

for the sake of another, clears our way to his heart, and enables us to influence his will for good.

But omit self-denial, and mortification of self, and then, as with æstheticism so with asceticism, there is a greater and more subtle danger still—a danger of superficial, so-called religion, of form without power. No, dear brethren, *all* of us, as far as we may, as far as God gives us grace, must be sanctified by being offered to God: and to make a perfect sacrifice, both soul and body must go together. Hear the words of S. Paul again: “I beseech you, brethren,” he says to the Romans, “by the mercies of God, that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your *mind*, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect *will* of God.”

Ah, but some of us may be tempted to say, that was all very well for S. Paul: but we are content to take a lower line. We are tempted to say that for *our* part we don't *want* to be saints. Then we do not want to go to heaven; for, it is written, “Without holiness,” that is, without sanctity, that is, without being a saint, that is, without leading a mortified, self-denying life, without this, or without these, for they all are the same thing, “no man shall see the LORD.”

Are we tempted again to object, and exclaim,

“This is a hard saying : who can hear it ?” It is not really, I should imagine, so hard as it looks. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” We must only make up our minds, and fully take in the meaning of *one* thing. It is this. It is a lesson conveyed in one terse, unmistakeable sentence in the Sixth Chapter of S. Matthew’s Gospel : “Ye *cannot* serve God and Mammon :” God and the world : God and self. To Live for the world is to Die to God : to Die to the world is to Live to God.

Whatever you do then, do all to God. In your Church life, your social life, your home life, your chamber life. In your prayers, your business : yes, and even in your Festivals and in your Fasts, in your recreations and amusements, do all to God, and to God alone, to His honour, to His glory, and for the love of Him.

And this next. We must not expect, or attempt to arrive at this state of self-mortification or self-denial all at once. We run a risk in that case of either being discouraged or disgusted by failure. No ! Bit by bit must be gained over from the body to the soul ; from the frail, ever-rebelling human will to the Divine Will. We want training and teaching in God’s ways. We want to be *gradually* won over to God, and for God.

And this last. This work of ours for God, or rather this work of God in us, must go deep. We must let it go deep, by not opposing ourselves to God’s grace. It must not be a surface work.

And therefore it must be a hidden work. "Except a corn of wheat fall *into* the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

Though we have many enemies to contend with, yet also those that are on our side are more in number, and mightier (thanks be to God !) than those which are against us. Our lot has been planted in a fair ground. Yea, we have a goodly heritage, the Church, God's own heritage. We have the patient and painful husbandry of God's Priests. We have the refreshing dews, the graces of the Sacraments. We have "the early" rain of Baptism, and the "latter rain" of Absolution, and the Sunshine of the Blessed Eucharist. What more do we need to make us bring forth much fruit?

Yes, thank God for myself as well as for you, from our Baptism to our last Communion, the Church is ever ready !

But with all these we must, if we would bring forth "much fruit," if we would not be of that chaff to be burned with unquenchable fire, if we would not throw away, waste, misuse, and squander that Principle of Life implanted in us, we must, I repeat, and I repeat it again and again, we must try hard, to subdue *selfishness*, to get self under, to mortify it, to kill it, to make it die out ; and, with this selfishness, all the various forms of lust, or impurity, or pride,

or vanity, or conceit it carries with it. Let us attack it *without* ostentation, for that is insincerity and hypocrisy, which is also another form of selfishness. Let us subdue it *with* cheerfulness, ever Dying to Self, and so ever Living while we Die, producing, on the one hand, and on the other laying up for ourselves "much fruit," the fruit of every virtue and grace, each of which in its own turn will be reproductive, each of which as it is sown "in the ground," that is in humility, will tend to the growth and sustenance of the Spiritual life, and indeed to the Life Everlasting!

"Death in life, Life in death!" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a Corn of Wheat fall into the ground and Die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth Much Fruit!"

SERMON XXIX.

Seasons of Sorrow.

TRIBULATION.

ACTS XIV. 22.

"WE MUST THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

THE word Tribulation means anything which we do not naturally like, but which it is good for us to bear. It generally means any kind of affliction of mind, body, or estate : any sorrow of mind, or pain of body, or loss of estate, which either, as it were, dashes us to the ground by a heavy blow, or (what is perhaps worse) continually keeps on harassing, annoying, wearying, vexing, fretting, we may almost say, teasing us.

And there is one more, the original, meaning of the word, from which indeed all these and many other meanings have come. It is a meaning which affects our whole life indeed, but more especially certain seasons of our life : seasons which *must* at some time or other, sooner or later, in some form

or other, occur to each one of us: seasons which seem to me to be very much like the work of the last weeks or the end of Harvest.

Now this meaning of the word Tribulation which under God's blessing I would wish to expand, and draw out, may sometimes, and I trust even now, come into our minds to our comfort.

Let us then try to learn a lesson from God's own picture of a Harvest-field, at the end of Harvest. Let us bring that picture before our eyes, and let us suppose the corn all cut and carried! There is little work now left for the sickle or scythe! Reaping and gleaning are quite over! Nevertheless there *is* a good deal of *one* part of the work still to be done, and it is that part, that essential part, which, I suppose, will be going on, somewhere or other, the whole year round, more or less.

It is that of the *Thrashing out of the corn* before it is stowed away in the barn, and rendered fit for use.

Somewhere or other, this Thrashing Machine, or the Flail, is always at work. There is always going on, with some few stops, that long monotonous grind of the Machine, or that sharp quick stroke of the Flail.

And wherefore? Now we know that without this Thrashing out, the corn would be of no use whatever. What does the Machine or Flail do? It seems to seize upon the corn. It dashes it

about, bruises it, tears it, rubs it, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. Now and then there is a rest, but soon the work goes on as hard again as ever!

And we know *this* also, namely, that *every* grain *must* undergo this process of the Machine or the Flail before it is stowed away in the barn, or gathered into the garner. We well know further *why* it is thus thrashed—it is to get the husk, or (as it is called in some parts of the country) the hull off. It is to rub, or bruise, or break, or tear it away, so that the corn may become fit for use, or in other words good for food.

Now this is exactly the true meaning of the word “Tribulation:” that is, just in the same way as *every* grain of corn *must* be thrashed in order to be fitted for food, so “we must, through much Tribulation” be fitted to “enter the Kingdom of God!”

But, now let us see in what connection the words of the text stand. Who spoke them? S. Paul and S. Barnabas. Where did they speak them? At certain towns called Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. To whom did they speak them? To the disciples. Why did they speak them? To “confirm” or strengthen the souls of these disciples, and to “exhort them to continue in the Faith.” So we read that, “when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to

Iconium and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the Faith." And *then* it follows, almost abruptly, "that we" (not they only but "we") "must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."

Why here is a wonderful thing! It amounts to this. These Apostles say to the newly converted disciples, "Here is a comfort for you, here is a great reason for you to persevere in your religion." Why? Because, "You shall have much ease, much pleasure, much honour, much wealth, be thought well of, have long life, health, or strength?" Not one of these. Nay, the facts of the case were against such an exhortation as *that*. Quite the contrary. It might have been said by the preacher, S. Paul; "I, who was preaching to you, as you well know, not many days ago was stoned at Lystra. Do I tell you that *you* need not expect such like treatment? Do I tell you that *you* may escape it? Do I tell you that *your* trials shall be few, and easy, and light? No; I tell you, that we must, you and I, and all who love JESUS CHRIST, and live godly, 'must through' not only 'Tribulation,' but '*much* Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God!'" It is as if he had commented on his text in some such words as "Find your motives for comfort and perseverance in what you know to be the case, what you may learn by my experience. Because you *shall* have

much Tribulation, *therefore* be comforted and persevere."

But you may ask me, why should *we*, why *must* we have Tribulation? Why must we be often suffering pain, or sickness, or poverty, or loss of friends, or unkindness, or undeserved ill treatment, or a thousand other kinds of sorrow and Tribulation?

My dearest Brethren, there are many, many reasons! So many, that the more we think of them, the more they seem to multiply, until at last we come to say, "how could it be otherwise?"

Let us begin with a few of these reasons, and take this for one. "If," says a holy writer, "there had been anything better or more beneficial to man's salvation than suffering, CHRIST certainly would have showed it by word or example." That is, our Blessed LORD JESUS CHRIST, would have showed us by His example, or told us in the Gospels of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven some other way. But He did not. What kind of life *did* our Blessed LORD lead on earth? Was it a life of pleasure? Or was it a life of Tribulation, a life of Suffering?

Oh, think! Is there one little petty annoyance, or one great agony of body, or mind, or estate, you can even imagine, that He did not suffer? He was so poor as a Child, as to have no better Cradle than a Manger at His Birth; so

poor as a Man, as not to have during His whole lifetime any place where to lay His Holy Head: so poor at His Death, as even to be stripped of His only garment, as He hung naked on the Cross. He was little thought of and slighted, and made no account of, by His relations. He was forsaken by His friends. He was fiercely persecuted by His enemies. He was incessantly wearied by snares set to catch Him in His talk. He was mocked, and ridiculed, and laughed at, and assailed by the senseless abuse of the lowest rabble.

So also was it with His blessed Body. It was shelterless, exposed to the cold, faint with thirst and want of food, and, lastly, racked with the awful pain which so pure a Body could alone have felt, in so great a degree, the pain and agony of being nailed to the Cross.

These are only a few, very few, of the things which our Blessed LORD suffered in mind, in body, and estate. So far for His *Example* to us in Suffering!

But not only did He suffer, and was our Example in suffering, but He *expressly* warns His followers that they should, that they *must* suffer. He says, "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his LORD." "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "In the world ye shall have Tribulation." And so too S. Paul tells the Thessalonians, "We told

you before that we should suffer Tribulation.” And again he says to S. Timothy, “All that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS *shall* suffer persecution.”

These are only a few of the passages in the Bible, which tell us that all Christians *must* meet with trials, *must* have sorrow and pain, *must* “through *much* Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.”

There is a second reason. CHRIST did no sin, *yet* He suffered for us. Much more we who are not sinless, one day or, perhaps even, one hour of our lives, *must* suffer. In some way or other every sin we commit *must* have its punishment, either in this world or the next. If we meet with no suffering here, seeing that we all have sinned, we *must* meet with it there. Therefore it follows that if we meet with much suffering or Tribulation here, we may take it, if we love God, for a sign of God’s love to us, either to bring us to, or to deepen our repentance for our sins, for “whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

Still, on the other hand, it is equally true to say that the greatest sinners are not always the great sufferers here. You may see a man leading an easy, careless life; you may see everything going well with him apparently; you may see a man even leading a sort of contented life in the commission of open, notorious, habitual sins; you

may see a man influencing others by his authority or example, overthrowing, and poisoning them by his bad influence, spreading himself or flourishing (as the Psalmist says) "like a green bay-tree;" you may even see a sinful man dying what appears to be a calm, peaceful death. And you may get perplexed, and ask yourself, Why is this? And you may answer to yourself, Perhaps, nay almost certain it is, that God has dealt with that man as with Ephraim, God has "let him alone!" He has had no Tribulation. You may go by some day, and he is gone. Alas! has he "gone" like Judas "to his own place?" He has gone! Gone alas, there is so much need to fear! to the place "prepared for the devil and his angels."

There is a third, and a greater and a more blessed reason why we *must* meet with "much Tribulation," *namely*, in order that we may "enter into the kingdom of God," that is, in order to fit and purify us to enter into that blessed glorious Kingdom! Not one of us would dare to say that we *are* fit to "enter into," to appear before the Presence of the All-pure and All-holy God. But *every one* of us may say that he is *being fitted*. And thrice happy is he if he can say that "much tribulation" is fitting him. Yes, Tribulation is indeed one of the chief ways, if not *the* chiefest way of so fitting us. My dearest brethren, we *want* this Tribulation; we *want* it sorely both for body and soul. Pain and sickness supply this need for the

body, sorrow does it for the soul. Both *must* appear before GOD; both *must* have "much Tribulation." CHRIST the Sufferer is also the great Purifier. And it is by being like Him, by "bearing about in the body the dying of the LORD JESUS, that the life also of JESUS will be made manifest in our body."

And here a story occurs to me which may help to make my meaning clear.

There was a holy Bishop of old, who lived in the time of the Apostles, and therefore very near the time of our Blessed LORD. He was in fact the disciple and pupil of that particular Apostle of our Blessed LORD "whom He loved," I mean S. John the Evangelist. His name was Ignatius. And they called him by a surname which means, "one who carries God about with him." He lived indeed in days of Tribulation, when it was not what the world calls safe for any one, and, for a Bishop, almost certain death to be a Christian. At last his time came, he was sent for by the Emperor, or heathen king, who asked him, alluding to his surname, "Dost thou carry CHRIST about within thee?" "Yes," said Ignatius, "for it is written, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them.'" Then the king gave this command, "It is my will that Ignatius, who saith that he carrieth about the Crucified Man within himself, be bound and conducted to Rome to be devoured there by wild beasts for the entertainment of the people."

Shocking as it sounds, there were, as you doubtless know, in those days places called amphitheatres, (the ruins of which remain to this day,) places with seats all round, where the people actually used to watch wild beasts, (which were kept partly for this purpose,) tearing to pieces Christians condemned to death.

Well, when S. Ignatius was being brought near this dreadful place, he heard the lions roar, and so schooled was his heart by tribulation, so exactly did he *live* the word in its fullest meaning, that when he heard them, instead of being frightened and trembling, he calmly said, "I am the Wheat of CHRIST: I must be ground by the teeth of those beasts, to be made the Pure Bread of CHRIST."

But now let us see what are the advantages of Tribulation to us. O how many they are! What will *not* Tribulation do? It brings out and tests a man's true character. No one can tell what he is, or what his neighbour is until he has been tried by Tribulation. Remember Job. Remember how *he* stood that test. Remember Satan's lie about him, "Put forth Thine hand," the hand of Tribulation, he says to God, "and he will curse Thee." See how God heaped trouble and tribulation upon Job,—loss of relations, loss of wealth, reproaches of friends, foul and loathsome disease. And instead of cursing, he only said, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, *blessed* be the

Name of the LORD." Truly, said a Saint of old, "one Blessed be God in Adversity, is worth ■ thousand thanksgivings in Prosperity."

Tribulation also works patience. And the very reason why young people are often so impatient, and discontented, and fretful, is not so much because they are young, but because they have rarely seen "much Tribulation." It is a beautiful sight to see the patient chastened look brought about by Tribulation borne in ■ loving Christian spirit. There is nothing dull or listless about it. It is only calm, bright, steady, and earnest. I call to mind this look in three or four out of many cases: one was a gentleman of high position, now gone to his rest, his tribulation was the hourly suffering of his wife for many years, until at last GOD took her. Another was the bodily suffering of a poor bed-ridden woman, from whom I never heard an impatient word. Another was ■ Priest once sadly yet gladly persecuted for the cause of CHRIST and His Church. Another was a Chorister child, now singing Alleluias in the choirs of Heaven. (O how well I remember their looks!) In them all "much Tribulation" had worked the patient, subdued, chastened, bright and happy look which *nothing* but "much Tribulation" can work!

Yes indeed! Tribulation does its holy work, and leaves its holy mark on all ages, classes, and sexes!

But above all, and better still, Tribulation

makes us pray. It makes us pray earnestly. It makes us pray as we never prayed before. We may resist the inclination, but the first impulse when God sends Tribulation as a sign of His love, is, to make us ask God for help. "*Before I was afflicted I went astray: before I was troubled I went wrong.*" "It is *good* for me that I have been in trouble," said David. Why good? Because "*when I was in trouble I called upon the Lord.*" People little think when "*much Tribulation*" comes upon them, *why* it comes. They are sometimes apt to fret, and get impatient, and strangely enough in some few cases, even to get careless about church and private prayer, and they say they don't "see why" they "should have so many troubles." You will hear some say by way of a curious, foolish contradiction, that they "have so many troubles" that they have "not time to think about religion." They complain of their "misfortunes" or their "bad luck," as they call it! And all the while they forget that these Tribulations are only sent, not as Scourges, harshly to drive them away, but as Cords lovingly to draw them to seek the LORD, and instead of neglecting Him, to make them increase their prayers, and make them turn *to* Him instead of turning *away from* Him.

Then once more, Tribulation purifies and cleanses the heart. See by what a mass of corruption, this heart of ours is rendered unfit to serve a pure

GOD! Look at this heart of ours honestly, and by the light of GOD's judgments. There is the uncleanness of sin: or the dust and dross of vanity: or the love of self which wraps us round and holds us back from the Kingdom of GOD. There are the earth, the dust, the hull, the husk, which want thrashing, and winnowing out of us before we can be fit for the heavenly garner, the heavenly Harvest Home! All this the Thrashing Machine, or Flail of Tribulation does. It smites us down by some sudden affliction. It bruises us without breaking us by some unexpected kindness. It detaches, or tears away from our heart, some engrossing worldly affection,

“Yea, still this flail upon us He doth lay,
To thrash the husk of this our flesh away,
And leave the soul uncovered!”¹

Tribulation, “much Tribulation,” then, my brethren, sooner or later we “*must*” have! I have told you of a few of the good things it does for us, one more question, and I have done.

How shall we meet Tribulation? And remember by Tribulation I mean, not only great trials like martyrdom, but the petty trials of every-day life, as well as great sorrows. “If ye suffer for righteousness,” that is for CHRIST's sake, suffer anything if only it be for His sake, “happy are ye.” See in how many ways, Tribulation may come to each and all of us, and that for CHRIST's

¹ George Wither quoted by Abp. Trench.

sake, for the sake of our religion. A Priest for being overstrict : one man for being scrupulously upright and honest : another for being religious : a young man for withdrawing from the company of swearers, or refusing to drink : a woman, ay, even in what is called Society, for refusing to listen to light and dangerous conversation, or for dressing very quietly : a boy in Choir for trying hard to be quiet and reverent in Church. All these, and O so many more ! are open to the keen cutting weapon of ridicule, or persecution ! These indeed are all petty Tribulations. But to some of us, to most of us, they are not easy to bear. After all they too are the trials to separate our wheat from our chaff. Greater or less it is all the same. Heavy sorrows or petty trials, they *must* all be borne. We must endure them *all* for CHRIST'S sake ! Well then these, and the harder tribulations, how shall we meet them ?

1. By remembering that we *must* have them ; that we cannot avoid them ; that God sends them in love, and that they are good for us. But also we must bear them—

2. In meekness and resignation to the Blessed Will of God. We must, shrink as we may, yet go forward and meet them with the blessed words our LORD used in the Garden of Gethsemane in the hour of His own bitter agony and Tribulation ; we must meet them, and conquer them by the words “Thy will be done.” They are *not* to be met by

murmuring at the Will of God when Tribulation comes. We only increase them by so doing, as well as drawing future punishment upon us. They are not to be met, as I read the other day in a terrible story, they were met by a poor woman. Let me tell it to you. It is a simple, simple story, but how often have we acted much in the same spirit? This woman had a child, an infant. She made it her idol, her whole soul was knit into it. It fell dangerously ill. There seemed to be no hope of its recovery. The Priest came to visit and console her. He knelt by the bedside and prayed for mother and child. He prayed that God would give her "patience under her Tribulation," and, *if it were His will*, that the child might get well. The woman (God forgive her,) flew into a passion, and said the awful words "It *must* be His will, I *cannot* lose my child." The Priest tried in vain to pacify her, and sorrowfully went away. To the surprise of every one, the child got well. Years passed by. The child grew to 'be a man. And now see what follows from resisting the Will of God. His mother lived to see that child grow up a thoroughly abandoned wicked man: she herself saw him, after he was grown up, die on the gallows! See what it is to resist the Will of God, and not only so, but to follow our own will in Tribulation.

Then again we must accept Tribulation with cheerfulness, and even (which is harder still) with

joy. Our dear LORD, remember, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross." The Apostles after they had been put in prison, and beaten, "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." S. Paul says, "that we glory in Tribulations," that he took "*pleasure* in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distress for CHRIST's sake." So we must try to be bright, and as far as may be cheerful, and contented under all our own trials and Tribulations.

Let us now, lastly, bear this one point always in mind. It is the chief of all our points. It is one which includes all the rest. It is this, namely, that God sends much Tribulation in *order* that we may enter His Kingdom, and, if we love Him, for no other purpose. Let us remember too, for our comfort, that we shall *never* be tried *beyond* our strength. Let us be quite certain, quite sure that God knows *exactly* at what point to stop: that *not one drop* will be added to our cup of Tribulation, more than is absolutely necessary for us: that as our "Day" is, so will be our "Strength;" that however much or great our Tribulation, there *must* be an end to it—"Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning:" however great, however heavy, however overwhelming, our Tribulation may be, it *can* be as nothing compared with the Joy to which it leads!

The more we try to pull a shell-fish away from a rock, the faster it holds. So the more Tribula-

tion comes upon us, the more we should cleave to CHRIST our Rock : the more strength He sends us, the more not only we must but *we shall be able* to persevere !

“For which cause,” says S. Paul, “we faint not ; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more Exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are Temporal ; but the things which are not seen, are Eternal.”

And beautifully is it written in the Book of Tobit, “O blessed are they which love Thee, for they shall rejoice in Thy Peace ; Blessed are they which have been Sorrowful,” (and yet have rejoiced) “for all Thy Scourges,” (Thy Tribulations) “for they shall rejoice for Thee, when they have seen all Thy glory, and shall be Glad for Ever !”

Deo Gratias.

41.

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